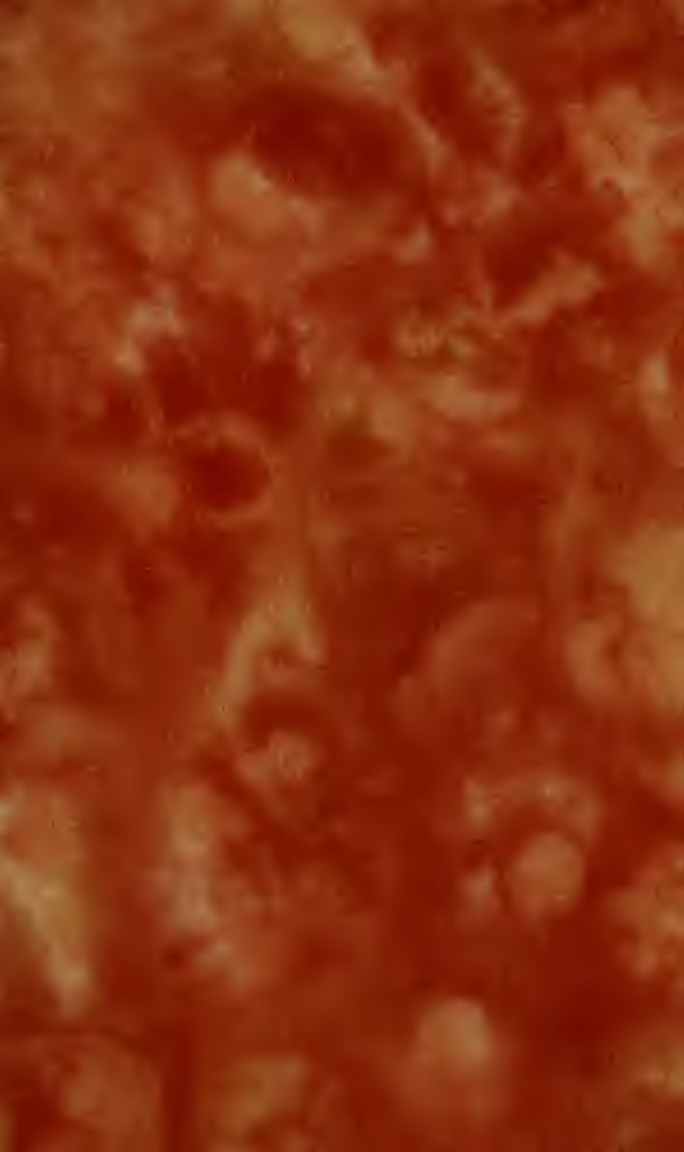


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HENRY SMEATON:

A JACOBITE STORY

OF

THE REIGN OF GEORGE THE FIRST.

BY

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"THE WOODMAN," "THE OLD OAK CHEST,"
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IN THREE VOLUMES.—VOL. II.

LONDON:

T. C. NEWBY, PUBLISHER

WELBECK STREET CAVENDISH SQUARE.

1851.

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HENRY SMEATON.

CHAPTER I.

There are moments in the life of every one, when some sudden and unexpected change hurries us rapidly through a bustling and exciting scene, where we are called upon to decide and act suddenly upon unforeseen conditions, and then leaves us to pause and reflect in solitude and silence upon what we have just done. The effect is strange, as all men arrived at mature life must have felt, when, left to our own

thoughts, we scan the busy moments just passed, doubtful whether impulse or reason have guided us, and still more doubtful whether impulse or reason have guided us aright. Often the answer is, "Yes," and often, "No ;" and, when it is negative, man, with his great skill in covering his own faults and follies from his eyes, satisfies himself by shrugging up his shoulders, and saying—"I acted for the best—" forgetting too often how much of the fault he would thus palliate is attributable to the evil habit of not making reason his ever-present and ready guide. Exercise her daily : use her upon all occasions ; and she will act at the first call. Neglect her for an hour : she falls asleep, and requires time to be roused. All very trite ; but do any of us remember this as much as we ought ?

When Smeaton stood alone, shut up in the priest's chamber, he began to ask himself if he had done wisely in consenting to be hidden in that retreat ; and he could not but acknowledge that love for Emme-

line, and the thought of obtaining means of access to her under some remote and uncertain contingences, had shared more in fixing his determination than the consideration either of his own safety or of his own name and character. He saw that he had not acted in accordance with reason; but he too—for he was by no means perfect—treated the error lightly, saying to himself—

“Well, it is done, and cannot be undone. Let us make the best of it. There is always a way out of this secret chamber, that is one comfort; but I had better examine it more closely. I saw the key lying there, it is true, but I did not satisfy myself that it would turn in the lock; and it seemed somewhat rusty.”

Thus musing, he took the light from the table, and walked quickly through the passage along which the old woman had led him.

“She was foolish,” he thought, “to hesitate about showing me the way. No one could miss it.”

At the end of the lower passage, he found the key lying in the little niche, and taking it up, was about to apply it to the lock, when he thought he heard a step, without being able to distinguish at first whether it was in the passage behind him, or on the hill-side beyond the door. He turned round, and looked, and listened; and then clearly heard the step again, apparently close to him, but on the outside. The next instant, a voice was heard speaking in a grumbling tone, and with a strong Devonshire accent.

"I don't see what is the use of sending us down here," it said. "Why, twenty people could pass us in this wood."

"Never you mind; Jim, do your duty and obey orders," said another voice. "Let other people think what is *the use*. I am sure you would never find out for yourself, if it made you take ten steps off your horse's back. There, get on a little lower down. I'll mount guard here, where the path turns."

“ Oh, ho !” exclaimed Smeaton, to himself; “ the search has begun. I may as well wait here a little. Any one coming down the stairs, and along the passage, would soon be heard; and I think these two gentlemen out-side would easily be dealt with.”

He accordingly put the candle in the niche where the key had lain, brought the hilt of his sword a little round, and quietly placed the key in the lock. A few minutes passed in perfect silence, the men without either standing perfectly still, or sitting on the edge of the fountain; but then Smeaton’s quick ear caught the sound of a distant footfall, which evidently came nearer and nearer, but not by the passage in which he was standing.

“ Who may this new visitor be, I wonder !” he mentally ejaculated, and, bending down his head, listened more attentively. The step came nearer and nearer, and approached the door close to which he had placed himself. Then, a loud voice cried “ Stand !” and Smeaton could hear

the sound of what seemed a spring and a brief scuffle.

“Ugh, ugh! don’t strangle me!” cried a good, round, jolly voice. “Man, I am apoplectic, by the blessing of God and the assistance of capons and strong waters. If you twist my cravat in that way, you will get nothing but a dead statuary, which is as bad as a dead lion.”

The last words confirmed what the tone of voice had intimated to Smeaton before, that his good friend Van Noost was the person who had fallen into the hands of the Philistines; and, believing, from their conversation that morning, that the poor sculptor had more cause than himself to fear the pursuit of justice, he felt really sorry for him.

“Lion, or whatever else you may call yourself,” replied the soldier’s voice, “you must along with me. Come, come, no struggling, or I’ll break your pate, master. By ——, they say, ‘as fat as a

lord ;' and, if this is a lord, it is a fat one of the sort."

"Ugh, ugh!" cried Van Noost. "I tell you, you will strangle me if you drag me in that way."

Smeaton could bear it no more. The impulse to help the poor caster of leaden figures was too strong to be resisted ; and he gave way to it. In a moment, the key was turned in the lock and the door drawn back, hiding completely the light in the niche. A slight gleam of the risen moon showed the waters of the well about three feet across, with a little path beyond, and a soldier pulling Van Noost along. In a moment, Smeaton was across the well : the man, hearing a noise, turned his head ; but, before he could see whence it came, or who was his assailant, a blow from Smeaton's clenched fist forced him to relax his grasp upon the sculptor ; and a second, before he could use his sword, sent him rolling down the hill-side amongst the trees and bushes.

“Quick! Comewith me!” cried Smeaton, seizing Van Noost’s hand, and pulling him on. “Jump!—take a good spring.”

The last words were uttered after he himself had cleared the well, and was standing in the passage, but still holding Van Noost’s hand across the water. Some of the lead of the statuary’s profession, however, seemed to have got into the poor man’s hinder quarters; for, though he made a great effort to follow his conductor, he fell short by a few inches; and, had it not been for Smeaton’s grasp, might probably have been drowned. The other, however, dragged him into the passage head foremost, and quietly closed and locked the door.

“Hush!” he whispered, seeing that Van Noost was about to speak. “Hush! be perfectly still.”

“Jim, Jim,” cried the voice of the soldier without—“look after them. They are coming your way—stop them—shoot them dead, if they won’t stand.”

As he spoke, he scrambled up again towards the path, displacing a large stone which rolled down into the valley. Whether the other soldier took it for a flying enemy or not, I cannot tell ; but, instantly after, he vociferated—"Stand !" and the next moment the report of a pistol shot was heard.

Smeaton smiled, and whispered to his companion—"All is safe ; but keep perfectly silent."

The sound of many feet running from above was then heard, as some of the companions of the men below hurried down, alarmed by the shot ; and great confusion, with much talking, ensued, of which only fragments reached the ears of those in the passage, somewhat after the following fashion.

"What is the matter, what is the matter ?" "Here, come here. They have gone down here. I had got hold of him by the neck ; but another came up, and knocked me down." Who did you get

hold of?" "They have got a dark lantern with them; for the light flashed out and dazzled my eyes. If you don't make haste, they will be gone. They ran straight down for the bay."

Many other cries, questions, and answers were going on at once; but two or three of the soldiers, answering the call of the man who had fired the pistol below, hurried down the path and, accompanied by him, ran on, some between the back of the houses and the steep hill-side, and others along the verge of the little stream, thus sweeping the whole course of the valley till they reached the smooth, white sand on the shore of the bay.

The scene was calm and beautiful, the moon shining brightly over the sheltered water of the bay, and changing it into rippling silver, while Ale Head, dark and shadowy, swept like a gigantic wall round the south-western side; and the opposite point of Ale Down just caught the gleam of moonlight on its high head. It was a

scene which might have led a lover of the picturesque, or one of the unhappy children of Imagination, to pause and dream. But the soldiers had no such thoughts; one single object attracted their whole attention. This was a fishing-boat, quietly rowing out of the little mouth of the bay, and darkening a diminutive space on the shining sea beyond.

They drew their own conclusions, which, like most hasty conclusions from insufficient premises, were altogether false. The boat was merely filled with fishermen; and, if the pursuers had paused to consider, they would have comprehended that sufficient time had not elapsed between the firing of the shot above, and the moment that they reached the beach, for any person to have pushed off the boat and rowed to the entrance of the bay. They determined in their own minds, however, that the persons of whom they came in search, had made their escape by that means; and one said to the others—

“Well, they are off, that’s clear ; and there is no use of trying to follow ; for, even if we were to get the boats off, I know no more about ’em, than a jackass does of a powder-horn. Do you, Symes ?”

“No more than you do, corporal,” replied the other. “We had better go back to the house and tell the Justice.”

“Tell the captain, Symes—tell the captain,” replied the corporal. “That is what we must do. We know nothing of Justices. Justice has no more to do with us than my cap has with a bunch of keys. We act under our captain, Symes ; and to him I shall go and report. Come along, my men.”

In the mean time, while all these events had been passing on the side of the hill and in the passage near the well, other occurrences had taken place in Ale Manor-House itself, which I must briefly notice.

Richard Newark had crept quietly after Smeaton and Mrs. Culpepper as far as he

dared : and, at all events, had discovered the direction which they had taken. Emmeline had run out upon the terrace, and, watching the windows above, had gained some farther knowledge from the way in which she saw the light travel. Indeed, she clearly perceived it through the windows next to her own ; and it seemed to pause for some time there. A distant sound, however, caused her to return suddenly into the house and order the doors to be closed. This had hardly been done, when the old housekeeper returned ; and, going from servant to servant, in her quiet smooth way, cautioned each to say, if Colonel Smeaton was asked for, that he had ridden away to Axminster for the day.

Then came a period of suspense ; but it did not last very long ; for, at the end of five or six minutes, the approach of the troopers was intimated by the noise of their horses upon the terrace. Sundry orders

were given in a loud voice ; and then the great bell at the door rang.

“ Don’t open the door,” said Richard Newark, to one of the servants who was crossing the hall. “ Let me see who these folks are.”

Then, partly opening one of the windows of the saloon, he called out—

“ What do you want, my masters ? Do you think we hold a horse fair here, that you bring so many beasts for sale ?”

“ Open the door, in the king’s name and to the king’s troops,” said the officer in command, who had imbibed as much punch as was compatible with the due exercise of his understanding. “ We require to search this house.”

“ That you shall not do, were you twice as tall,” replied the boy, boldly, “ without a lawful right to do so. Do you know this is the house of Sir John Newark, a Justice of peace for the county ?”

“ Oh, let them in, Richard,” said Emmeline. “ You cannot keep them out.”

At the same moment, Justice Best advanced on foot to the window, saying—

“ Let your people open the door, Master Richard. My name is Best. You have seen me with your father, and must know that *I* am a Justice of the peace too. Sir John is aware of our coming, and makes no opposition.”

“ Oh, that is another case, worshipful Master Best,” replied the boy. “ Open the door, my men, and let in the great magistrate.”

Then, taking a light from the table, he went out into the hall and bowed low with mock reverence as the Justice and two or three of the soldiers entered.

“ Pray, what is your good will and pleasure, and whom do you seek, worshipful sir ?” asked the boy, whose wits seemed to sharpen under exercise. “ As for myself, I am quite harmless. I heard an old woman, one day, call me an innocent ; and my nurse used to call me her lamb. So that,

unless Justice be a wolf, I have nothing to fear from her fangs. Indeed, this knowledge-box of mine is so empty, that there are not materials within it sufficient to manufacture treason, even against a farmer's orchard ; and, as for robbery or murder, upon my life they never came into my noddle—always excepting birds' nests and mackerel in the bay."

" You are a merry boy, Master Richard," returned the Justice ; " but our purpose in coming hither is to seek a certain personage, passing for and reputed to be a servant of one Colonel Henry Smeaton. If he is produced at once, we shall give you no further trouble ; but if not, we must search the house ; for we are credibly informed that this man, in the disguise of a servant, is no other than the Earl of Eskdale, a known adherent of the Pretender. It is impossible for him to escape ; for the house is surrounded. So you had better produce him at once. As I wish to do everything with courtesy, how-

ever, you had better communicate what I say to Colonel Smeaton, who may escape injurious suspicions if he gives his companion up freely."

"Colonel Smeaton has gone over to Axminster this afternoon," said one of the servants, coming forward, "and won't be back to-night; but, as for his man, your worship, he was in the hall not a minute ago, and making all the maids laugh with his funny stories."

"Ah, very likely," replied the Justice. "We have heard he is a jocular person. This confirms our information. Be so good as to ask him to walk hither, and remember you have admitted that he was in this house not a minute ago."

"To be sure I did," retorted the man, surlily; "and I don't doubt that he'll be in this hall in less than a minute more."

So saying he walked away, murmuring something about a pack of fools, which the Justice did not hear, or did not choose to hear.

Turning quietly to the door of the smaller saloon, his worship observed in his usual soft and courteous accents, "Perhaps, Master Richard, you will allow me to examine my prisoner in this room. We have had a long ride ; and a seat in a chair would be pleasanter to me than to remain in the saddle or to stand upon my legs."

"Ay, they seem weakly," answered the lad ; "but you shall have right good leave and license to sit as long as a hen, if it pleases you, and see what you can hatch—a brood of nonsensicalities, doubtless !" he added to himself, as he followed the Justice into the room. Then, raising his voice again, he said—"Here is Justice Best, Emmy, come to look for Henry Smeaton's servant, accusing him of being attached to the three Kings of Brentford and committing high treason against the wise men of Gotham. He is going to examine him in here ; and we shall have rare

fun, I don't doubt. Do stay and see the proverbs of Solomon put into action."

Emmeline, however, was fain to escape from the room, with an inclination of her head to the Justice as she passed ; for, although she was desirous enough to hear all that took place, she feared that her anxiety and alarm might be evidenced too strongly.

It was clear enough to Mr. Justice Best that Richard Newark was laughing at him ; but, as the lad was generally considered in the county deficient in intellect, he contented himself with saying, " Poor boy !" and seated himself solemnly at the table.

" This fellow is not coming, it seems," said Captain Smallpiece, who had followed with some of the soldiers into the room. " I had better search the house, your worship."

" Nay, nay, nay !" exclaimed the Justice, " have a little patience, Smallpiece. One

of you have the goodness to call in my clerk."

"Here I am, sir," said a small man from behind; and, almost at the same moment, Smeaton's servant entered the room, with a curious and peculiar sort of leer upon his countenance, which seemed to show that he, at all events, entertained no apprehension of the result. He was followed by the servant who had spoken to the Justice in the hall, and some other domestics; and, raising his eyes to his face, the Justice asked, with an important air, "Pray, who are *you*, sir?"

"I am Colonel Smeaton's servant," he answered, with a strong Cockney accent. "They told me you wanted me."

"Are you his *only* servant?" asked the Justice, a good deal staggered by the man's appearance.

"He could not have a better," replied the man; "and, though I'm the only one,

I'm as good as two ; for I groom the horses and valet the master."

"Oh, ho!" ejaculated the Justice. "Now we are coming to it. Methinks a common lackey, sir, would not put on such a demeanour to a magistrate of the county acting in the king's name. My lord, concealment is of no avail. We know all about you, and have full information."

"Lord! lord! *I*, my lord!" cried the man; "to think of my turning out a lord!—I, who was born in a back garret at the corner of Fetter Lane, fattened upon the fumes of soap-suds—for my mother was a washerwoman, your worship—an honest woman, for all that—I, to turn out a lord! Well, the transmogrifications of this 'varsal world are miraculous, I do declare. Has your worship got my certificate in that little book; for if you have, I'll be a lord for all the rest of my life—see if I don't—and get a pension from the King, to keep up my dignity."

"Five foot, eleven, and a half," said the

Justice, reading from a paper he had taken out of his pocket-book, and then raising his eyes to the man's figure. "Deuce take it! he does not seem so tall as that."

"Five foot three quarters, without my shoes," replied the man, smartly; "but perhaps I shall grow, seeing that I am only one-and-thirty, and a peer of the realm. I don't see why I should not grow to any height, now I have right and title to hold my head higher than I ever thought to hold it. Humility has shortened me all this while."

"Come, come, sir," said the Justice, thrown into a great state of doubt and indecision. "If you are the Earl of Eskdale, you had better acknowledge it at once; and, whether you are or are not, treat the Court with respect."

"The Earl of Eskdale!" cried old Mrs. Culpepper, who had come into the room with the other servants. Then, seeing that surprise had done what few things ever did do, thrown her off her guard, she

added, "No, I can answer for it he is none of that blood. Why, the Earl of Eskdale must be an old, white-headed man."

"Ay, ay, but that earl is dead," exclaimed the Justice. "This is the young earl we talk of, my good lady—Mrs. Culpepper, I believe; I hope you are well, Mrs. Culpepper—but don't meddle with this business, for I don't think you can know anything about it."

"How can *you* know, Goody?" cried the servant, turning sharply round to her, with a mock look of indignation. "Pray don't do me out my dignity—I may be a peer or a prince, for aught you know."

"I never saw such a one," said the old woman, sarcastically; "but I can answer for your being none of the Eskdale family, for they were all tall, handsome men and women; and you are no more like them than a beggar's cur is like a stag-hound."

"Civil, you see, civil!" said the man. "You perceive that high station is not with-

out its inconveniences; but if your worship will only make me out a peer, I will take any title you please. I am quite indifferent as to names. Suppose you call me Lord Fetter Lane, or the Earl of Newgate."

"You may soon have a better right to either title than you expect," growled Captain Smallpiece, who was difficult to convince; but the Justice, whose wits were somewhat clearer, though not very pellucid either, began to have marvellous doubts on the subject of the man's real condition.

"Pray, sir," he said, "if you are really Colonel Smeaton's servant, and nobody else, when did you enter that gentleman's service, and where?"

"In Lunnun town," replied the man, drily, "on the fifth day of June last, at about half past three in the evening. Thank God, I have had a good edication, considering the mess I was brought up in; and I am very reg'lar in my habits—which I owe to my dear, departed mother, who

always kept her washing-books very correct, and wiped her hands whenever she took them out of the tub. She used to say she could always go into court with clean hands, poor woman; and so can I; for you see I always keep a little book here in my pocket, in which I put down when I enter, and when I quit, a service, and I get my kind masters to sign for me. Some of them don't speak as well as I deserve, it is true; but still they cannot say much harm. There is the book. You may look at it."

"Let me see, let me see," said the Justice; and, taking the book, he read some of the various characters, which had been given to the man before him by the different masters whom he had served; one of which was as follows:

"This is to certify that Thomas Higham was in my service for eleven months and three days—a clever fellow, but a saucy rascal—passably honest, and

not given to drink. I discharged him for his impudence.

“HENRY SACKVILLE,

“Deputy Comptroller of Her Majesty’s Household.”

Such was the first certificate he read ; but there were a number of others, all much to the same purpose, which fully accounted for the time of Master Thomas Higham, from the age of sixteen up to the moment at which he stood before the magistrate.

“There must be some mistake here,” said Mr. Best, beckoning up Captain Smallpiece and pointing to the papers before him. At that instant, the report of fire-arms was heard through the window which Richard Newark had left open ; and the Justice exclaimed : “Hark ! What is that ?”

“Some of the fools let a pistol off by

accident," answered the military officer. "Being fools, they are always committing some folly."

Having been thus oracular, he proceeded, with a somewhat unsteady gaze, to examine the certificates before him. He was one of those men who, even in their most sober moments, (and he was not now sober) have a certain obscurity of mental vision which prevents them from perceiving anything but what is immediately before them. He stumbled and blundered through several of the testimonials, repeating from time to time—"Well, I don't see what that has to do with it.—Well, I don't see—Tom Higham may be a good sort of saucy fellow ; but who is Tom Higham ? I should like to know.—You cannot tell that this is Tom Higham."

"But it is very clear that he cannot be Lord Eskdale," replied the magistrate ; for his lordship is six foot high, and this man is five foot four. I am sure there has been some mistake. Our information is de-

cided, it is true, that the Earl was seen passing this way. But we have no proof that he came to this house."

"Well, we had better search at all events," said the officer.

The magistrate, however, was of a different opinion. He thought he had gone quite far enough in offending Sir John Newark, of whom he stood in no little fear; he saw many means which the worthy knight might have of annoying, if not injuring, him, and knew that he would not at all scruple to use them.

A somewhat sharp altercation ensued, which highly amused Richard Newark, and not less Smeaton's servant, who, after it had gone on for some minutes, interposed with his usual saucy leer, saying :

"Will your worships tell me whether I am to be a Lord or not after all? I am very willing to be a Lord, if you wish it."

"Hold your tongue, fellow," said Justice Best. "You interrupt me in explaining to Captain Smallpiece that it would be wrong, discourteous, and perhaps ille-

gal, to search Sir John Newark's house without information that an attainted person was actually here. All the suspicions were of yourself; and, if they turn out to be groundless, my functions in the case cease. If Captain Smallpiece, indeed, thinks fit to take upon himself—"

Before he could finish the sentence, one of the corporals of the regiment, followed by the men who had been down on the beach with him, pushed his way through the crowd round the door and saluted in military fashion his commanding officer.

"Well, what the devil do you want, Corporal? I told you to keep watch outside."

"I have come to report that they have got off, sir," said the man. "We could not overtake them before they got into a boat and away."

"Who, who, who?" shouted the magistrate. "Who do you mean by, 'they'?"

"Why, the Earl and his servant, I suppose, your worship," replied the corporal. "I got hold of one of them by

the neck ; but then up comes the other, flashed the light of a dark lantern in my eyes, and, before I could draw sword, knocked me head foremost down the hill. — Good luck to the bush that stopped me. They ran away together down through the wood, and passed Jim, here, who fired his pistol at them.”

“ Ay, that I did,” said a man behind him.

“ They ran away down to the water, however,” added the other, “ and, before we could overtake them, had jumped into a boat and were rowing away out to sea.”

“ There, there, now,” cried Mr. Best, “ I told you how it would be.” And he looked straight at Captain Smallpiece, as if the whole of this mischance had been of that officer’s bringing about.

“ No, you did not,” rejoined the Captain. “ You did not say anything of the kind. You were cock-sure, like all the rest of them, that this lackey was the Earl disguised, and that you would pounce

upon him here like a hawk on a hedge-sparrow."

"But did you not wish to search the house without the slightest grounds of pretence?" demanded the magistrate. The officer, however, turned away from him, with a look of half-drunken contempt, and, addressing himself to the corporal, asked,

"What sort of men were they, corporal?"

"One was short and fat," said the corporal, "with a great many ribbons about him. The other was a tall man, and seemed youngish, as far as I could see."

"The Earl and his servant without doubt," said the Justice.

"I suppose so," grumbled Captain Smallpiece, in a disappointed tone. "What is to be done now? Shall we search?"

"Search! Search for what," demanded the Justice, "when they have got off to sea? There is no proof they were ever in the house at all, and very probably have been, during the time, down in one of

the huts. What is to be done! Why, march off your men as fast as possible and let us see how we can patch up matters with Sir John Newark. He won't forget it in a hurry, depend upon it. I require you, sir, to march off your men."

"Oh, very well," cried the Captain, indignantly. "That shall be done faster than you like perhaps.—There, sound boot and saddle." And he walked away to the door.

"Could you favour me with a glass of wine, Master Richard?" said the Justice, in an insinuating tone. "We have ridden far; and this is dry work."

"Not a drop," replied the boy, boldly. "You came on a fool's errand; and you may go dry away. I can tell you, Master Best," he added, with a laugh, "you'll want all the wit in your noddle to settle accounts with my father; and it would be unkind to take a jot out of the cannister by putting wine in. You have had quite enough to-night already, I should think;

and, at all events, you'll get no more here."

The servants laughed ; and, after trying hard for a look of dignity which would not come, Justice Best walked out of the room, with his clerk sneaking behind him, like a beaten cur.

" There, there," cried Richard Newark, running out into the hall and to the foot of the stairs, " shut all the doors and windows. Emmy, Emmy ! Come down. All the fools are gone !"

CHAPTER II.

HAVING already changed the *venue* once in the same chapter, I have judged it best to finish one of those fragments into which the caprice of authorship induces men to divide romances, before I return to Henry Smeaton and his companion in the passage. We must now, however, leave the party in the house, and once more place ourselves by the side of the well where, soon after the last words spoken by Smeaton, the moving away of the soldiers towards the

beach could plainly be distinguished ; and the path without seemed to be left to solitude and silence.

“ They are gone, my good friend,” said Smeaton, at length, still speaking in a whisper, lest any lingerer should be remaining behind. “ They are gone ; but we must still be very cautious, if we would escape danger. In Fortune’s name, what brought you over here, Van Noost ? If I had not seen you in the morning and recognized your voice to-night, you would still have been in the hands of the Philistines, my good friend.”

“ Thanks, great Samson, thanks !” cried Van Noost. “ The very next figure that I cast—if I live to cast any more—shall be the Hebrew giant, with his friend’s jaw-bone in his hand. I beg your Lordship’s pardon for joking ; but it is an evil habit of mine from times of old ; and I shall jest at my last gasp.—You asked me why I came here. Odds life, I do not know where I am ; but, if you mean, what

brought me towards Ale Manor, all I can tell you is, that it was zeal—zeal, which, like a bad huntsman, is always overrunning the good dog, Discretion.”

“ Hush !” said Smeaton. “ Do not speak so loud. But tell me in a whisper what road your zeal ran this time.”

“ Good faith,” replied Van Noost, “ it was in the road of your service, as I thought ; but the truth is this : ever since you left me in the morning, till towards the close of day, I have been helping the good old sexton, Mattocks, to clean the monuments in the church, breaking hard jests upon each other’s jests all the time. I borrowed a blacksmith’s apron, twisted myself up a paper cap, and stripped off my coat to keep it clean. Your Lordship would not have known me, I looked so much like a journeyman. Just, however, as we were leaving off our work, what should I see to my horror and consternation, but a troop of horse coming down the hill. There was no time to get my

pony, or wash my hands and face, and escape. You know that side of the hill. It is as bare and as round as a baby's cheek. So there was nothing for it but to go down to the little ale-house, keep on the garb I had, which was disguise enough, and persuade the good people to pass me off for a tapster. Well, the soldiers came down, swept all the oats out of the hamlet for their horses, called for ale in the true dragoon style, and sat down to boose round the door, while their captain and a certain Justice who was with them demanded punch, in a magisterial tone. Didn't I make the punch strong for them ! I paid for an additional bottle of rum out of my own pocket to fuddle their worships ; and, if I had dared, I would have treated the whole regiment. A minute after, however, in came Sir John Newark ; and he called for punch too. Sharp words enough passed between him and the others ; and suddenly, as I brought him in his bowl, I found out from what was said that it was your Lord-

ship these people were going after, and not your poor humble servant. I argued the matter with myself for a minute. Zeal said, 'Go and warn the noble Lord.' Discretion said, 'Take care you don't get caught yourself, Van Noost.' 'A fico for Discretion,' cried Zeal. It is quite dark ; the soldiers are all drinking ; the pony is at the back of the house ; there is a good piece of green turf which will do as well to silence his feet as felt to shoe a troop of horses ; up into the saddle, Van Noost, and away. 'Do as you would be done by, man!' So I listened to the last speaker, and got off. To say sooth, though I had some directions, I was not quite clear of the road, and strongly suspect I trotted fifteen miles instead of five. However, I reached the place at last, tied my pony under a clump of trees some way off, and was walking round the house to find a private way in, when I began to perceive that other people had come straighter than myself. I heard horses and voices,

and saw men and lights ; and my wits got into such a tangle with fright that I could not make out where I was. I ran up one path and down another, and did not know which way to go, till at length a fellow got me hold by the throat, half strangled me, and was dragging me away when all of a sudden I heard his cheeks give a squelch just like the sound of a lump of cold lead dropping into a furnace, then another tap, somewhat harder than one from a lady's fan ; and away he went rolling down the hill. Somebody got me by the paw at the same moment, pulled me along, through a horse-pond I believe, for my feet are all wet ; and here I am, your Lordship's most devoted servant ; but *where*, who can say ?”

“In a safe place for the present, Van Noost,” replied the young nobleman ; “and I must care for your security as best I can. —Hush ! I think I hear them coming past again.”

Advancing to the door, he put his ear

close to it, and listened. A moment or two after, the men returned from the beach, some of them at least passing along the same path and talking as they went. Smeaton listened with deep attention ; but Van Noost continued fidgeting about, notwithstanding an impatient gesture from his companion, who, as soon as the soldiers had passed by, turned sharply round, demanding—"What are you doing with the key ? You are stopping up the wards."

"No, no," replied Van Noost, "only taking a model. I always carry some putty in my pocket for the express purpose."

"That is not right," said Smeaton, sharply. "Cease, sir, cease. You have no business with the key."

"Oh, very well, my lord," assented the sculptor, withdrawing the putty from the key, wrapping it up carefully in his handkerchief, and putting it in his breeches pocket. "It is a curious shaped key too ; and I should like to have a model of it—

very old—Queen Elizabeth or King Edward I should think.”

Smeaton made no reply, but again turned his ear to the door. All remained silent for some minutes ; and then came the blast of a trumpet above.

“I think they are gone or going,” said the young nobleman. “I fancy I could distinguish the sound of the horses’ feet marching away. Listen, Van Noost !”

“Oh, yes. Praised be God for all things!” ejaculated Van Noost, after he had listened for a moment. “The vagabonds are gone. Let us get out of this burrow.”

“Stay a minute,” said Smeaton ; “we had better get more information first. Wait here for me a short time ; and I will go above for intelligence. They will not leave me long without news if the men are really gone.”

As he spoke, he took up the light, somewhat it would appear to Van Noost’s consternation. “But, my lord, my lord,”

he said. "I shall not be able to see if you take away the candle."

"What, are you afraid of the dark?" asked Smeaton, laughing. "Well, you shall keep it. Only light me along to the foot of the first flight of stairs. And then, remember, whatever you hear, remain below. If need should be, and you should ascertain that any of these men have remained behind to search the place, you can take your chance of escape by that door; only remember it opens over a well on the hillside; and, if you do not leap more lightly than you did just now, you will go down like one of your own leaden figures, and be drowned; for the water is up to the brim, and it is deep."

"You forget, my lord," returned Van Noost, "that you were pulling me along head foremost; and I knew not where I was going. I can leap as well as any man, with a clear space before me; but one feels some trepidation in jumping into a dark pit's mouth."

“ Well, well, take the candle and light me,” said the young nobleman.

Walking quickly on, he reached the foot of the first flight of steps. Then, leaving Van Noost below, he ascended to the priest’s chamber to wait in darkness for some intelligence. As he stood and listened—vainly, for some minutes—for any sound in the adjoining chamber, he had time to ask himself whether he had acted altogether rightly in bringing Van Noost into that secret part of Sir John Newark’s house ; and he concluded that he had no title to do so.

“ And yet,” he said, to himself, “ it is not in reality his house at all.”

But that did not quite satisfy him ; and he determined, if he found that the neighbourhood was clear of the soldiery, to send the good sculptor forth by the same way he entered, so as to let him see as little of the secrets of the place as possible.

He was becoming somewhat impatient of the oppressive silence, and felt half in-

clined to open the door and look out, when he heard sounds not far off. A door was opened, closed, and locked, and then the large bed was rolled round upon its casters. The next instant, the light shone in, and good Mrs. Culpepper appeared, with a candle in her hand. Her face bore greater traces of agitation than it displayed on any ordinary occasion ; and Smeaton began to fear that he had considered himself safe too soon ; but the old lady's first words dispelled alarm on that head.

"They are gone, sir," she said, entering the room ; "they are gone." And, with trembling hands, she set the candle on the table.

"I am sorry you have suffered such a fright on my account, Mrs. Culpepper," said Smeaton, in a kindly tone ; "but I can assure you now, as I did before, that there was nothing to fear on my account."

The old lady seemed hardly to attend to him ; and the state of agitation displayed by so very calm and demure a per-

son, set Smeaton's fancy busy with fears for Emmeline.

"I dare say not, sir—I dare say not," she said, with quick, but faltering, accents. "They came looking for the Earl of Eskdale, and your name is Smeaton. And yet," she continued, gazing in his face, "and yet—Will you be kind enough, sir, to let me look at your wrist?"

"I have no objection at all," returned Smeaton, a good deal surprised. "But what can my wrist have to do with this business?"

"I will tell you in a minute, sir; I will tell you in a minute," replied the old woman. "Your right wrist, if you please."

Smeaton drew up the sleeve of his coat as far as it would go—unfastened the studs which held it together just above the ruffles, and, baring his arm, held it out to her. The old woman took his hand in hers, and, holding his arm near to the candle, leaned her head over it. A large irregular scar appeared some two

or three inches above the hand. The young nobleman had often remarked it, but had no recollection how it came there; and now, to his great surprise, he found warm drops falling upon it from the old woman's eyes. The next instant, she kissed them away, with an eagerness quite extraordinary; and then, looking up in his face, with the tears still upon her cheeks, she exclaimed—

“Oh, yes, Henry, oh yes, my lord! I know you now. That mark cost me the bitterest hours that ever I knew in my life.”

“Pray, explain,” said Smeaton. “I do not at all understand what you mean, nor know how the scar came there.”

“I will—I will,” she sobbed, wiping her eyes. “Often have you sat on these old knees. Often have you clung with your arms round this old neck. I was your nurse, my lord, from the time you were taken from the breast till you were five years old. You were my nursling, my pet,

my darling. It seemed as if God had sent you to me to console me for my own child I had lost ; and I loved you as few mothers ever loved a child."

"I recollect my nurse, Nanny, very well," said Smeaton. "Can you be she?"

"Oh, yes! Nanny Culpepper—poor Culpepper, the serjeant's wife, who was killed," she answered. "But let me tell you, Henry, about that scar. When you were just about four, you were a dear, rash boy ; and I left you only for a minute in a room where there was a fire. In playing about, you tripped over something, and fell with your arm upon the burning wood. I heard you cry, and ran back in haste ; but I found you burnt all across the wrist there. I dared not tell my lord or my lady ; for I knew they would be very angry at my having left you ; and I thought I should have a hard matter to quiet you. But the moment I told you that, if you made a noise, and they found

out what had been done, Nanny would be sent away, and you would never see her again, you dried your eyes and ceased crying altogether. I never saw a child do the like ; and, though the wound was very painful and I had not much skill, you suffered me to go on dressing it for you, and doing my best to heal it, till it was well, without ever letting any one see that you were in pain. Fortune favoured me, or I could not have concealed it so long ; for those were troublous times. My lord was moving about, and a great deal in London. My lady was often away, too, anxious for his safety ; and the wound got quite well before they ever remarked it. Then, however, my lord questioned me sharply. I made a sullen answer ; and he would have discharged me on the spot ; for he was a strong spirited man, and had much to grieve him. But my lady interceded for me ; and I was kept on till he was forced to fly beyond seas. Then, when she was about to join him, he wrote to tell her what ser-

vants should accompany her. I was pointedly left out ; and I knew he had not forgotten me. But how you cried when you left me, I shall not forget. Oh, sir, you do not know what deep root is taken by the feelings of our hearts in those early years. Though you have not altogether forgotten your poor nurse, you *have* forgotten a great deal of what passed then ; but there is not one thing—no, not one of your looks, or any of your little prattle—that I do not remember even now. I love Miss Emmeline very much, too, though she does not know it ; but I can never love any one again as I loved you.”

“I am sure I loved you well too,” replied Smeaton ; “for the recollection of my poor nurse is the only thing referring to those days that still remains upon my mind.”

“I am sure you did—I am sure you did,” she repeated. “But, oh, now, tell me, my lord, what do you mean by saying you are safe ? Your father was what they

call 'attainted,' I think ; and that affected all his family. So how can *you* be safe ? They are cruel laws to punish an infant for the fault of his father."

"Make yourself easy, Nanny," replied Smeaton, in a kindly tone. "The attainder was specially reversed, as it affected my mother and myself. She had good friends at the courts both of William and Ann ; and you know, she is a wise, active, and prudent woman ; so that she took every means to secure for her son both safety and competence. It is true, I might be put to much inconvenience by the suspicions of the government—nay, plans and purposes, greatly affecting my happiness, might be frustrated or rendered more difficult of execution than they are already, if I were discovered ; but I have nothing else to fear."

"I think I understand," said the old woman. "Does Sir John Newark know who you are ?"

"He does," replied Smeaton. "It was

very imprudently revealed to him by one who had no business to meddle."

"That is strange—very strange," said the housekeeper, thoughtfully. "You are not married, are you, my lord?"

"No," answered Smeaton; "but I have much reason to believe he thinks I am."

"Ay, I see, I see," rejoined the housekeeper. "Now I understand it. But you must on no account let him know that I have recognised you. He is shrewd and keen. Beware of him, beware of him; for he pursues his objects without fear, or remorse, or hesitation; and few know what those objects are till it is too late to baffle him. He is a kind and good master to me, because I do everything he tells me, and he does not fancy that he can be watched as closely as he watches others; no, nor that a poor creature like me can perhaps make all his schemes prove vain. Well, well, we shall see. But have a care of him."

“I will,” replied Smeaton ; “and indeed I am upon my guard against him already. He is not aware that I know so much of his history and character as I do.”

“He would not suffer you within these doors, if he did,” returned the old woman. “But now you can come out in safety ; for these people are all gone ; and they fancy, from some stupid blunder of their own, that you have got off to sea in a boat, and a fat man with you, whom one of the soldiers vows he gets hold of by the neck.”

Smeaton laughed.

“I think I can explain one part of their mistake,” he said ; “and indeed I was going to ask your advice upon a point of some difficulty.”

He then related to her all that had occurred with Van Noost and the soldiers, as far as he knew it ; but, when he told her that the good statuary was even then waiting below, she shook her head gravely, saying—

“He must not be seen here on any ac-

count. Send him away, Henry, send him away, my lord—”

“Nay, nay,” said Smeaton. “Call me Henry still, when we are alone ; and, at other times, call me, and think of me, as Colonel Smeaton. But this matter puzzles me. I fear that the poor fellow may miss his way, and get into mischief ; for I do not think I can describe the road to Keanton so that he can find it, not knowing it too well myself.”

“You take him out by the door over the well,” replied Mrs. Culpepper ; “and I will send round a boy to the path, who shall guide him so far that he can make no mistake. Sir John must never know that he has been in there ; and hearken—the moment Sir John comes back, he will make you pledge your honour not to tell the secret of this place to any one. Therefore, if you wish to tell it—and I think, perhaps, you may, if I judge right—do so before he returns.”

Smeaton paused thoughtfully, and then said, as if speaking to himself—

“Is it wrong to meet a bad man with his own weapons?”

“No, no,” cried the old woman, “quite right I have been doing so for the last twelve years, and have beat him at them. You look doubtful. *I* have no doubt, and, perhaps, if you knew as much as I do, you would have none either. But never mind. It shall be done for you. If you have scruples, keep them. Emmeline shall know without your telling. Indeed, I have often thought to let her know, as she has a right, but thought it might be dangerous ; for, if he once saw that there was the least secret between her and me, I should not be here an hour after ; and then all would be lost. But now, get this man away, and then come back. Tell him to wait upon the path till a boy comes up to him, and says, ‘Keanton,’ and then to follow him. I will wait here till you return, and will find means to talk to you longer to-morrow.”

CHAPTER III.

I am not sure that the phlegmatic temperament, as it is called, is not the happiest for the possessor thereof. People are apt to exclaim—

“Give us great pleasures, even if they be accompanied by great pains.”

Hopeful mankind! ye seldom estimate prospective pains at their real worth; and ye always over-estimate the pleasures—till they are gone. Two great races of philosophers, if not more, the Stoic and

the Chinese Mandarins, judging more sanely—I am not quite sure that the Epicureans might not be included also, ay, and many more sects—have always sought for the less intense. Whether a respectable fat Bonze, having his toes tickled by his fourteenth or fifteenth wife, without the slightest expectation of anything like high, sentimental pleasure, but without the slightest fear of anything like strong mental pain, is or is not in a more desirable condition than Galileo in his dungeon, I will not take upon myself to say; yet one thing is certain—that this world being full of miseries, and when we open the door for one high enjoyment thousands of pains rushing in, there is some policy in having but few entrances to the house, and opening them as seldom as possible.

A phlegmatic temperament has assuredly the advantage of leaving few assailable points at the mercy of an enemy; and the Dutch are generally supposed to be as phlegmatic as any other nation; but

such certainly was not the case with Van Nooſt. Whether, by transplanting, he had acquired more the character of a sensitive plant than of a cabbage, or whether the Norman or Saxon blood, derived from his mother, overbalanced the Frieslandish part of his composition given by his father, I cannot tell ; but certain it is, that he was of a very moveable and excitable disposition, notwithstanding the national breadth of his nether man, and the firkin-like rotundity of his whole frame. His soul was a busy, fiery little soul as ever was put into a heavy body ; and most intensely did he fret and fidget during Smeaton's long absence, although he had a candle to light him, and the coveted key to work upon. Three times, he walked along the passage ; thrice, he measured the size of the keyhole ; four times, he took an impression of the key ; and when, at length, he heard a step coming down from the rooms above, he was all in, what is expres-

sively called, a twitter, lest the person approaching should be any but the person he desired.

Whether he had calculated upon a comfortable sojourn at Ale Manor-House during the night, or whether his imagination suggested dangers which did not exist on the road before him, or whether his long evening ride, added to his morning ride, had somewhat bruised and fatigued the part that pressed upon the saddle,—sure it is that he received the intimation that he must ride twelve miles farther to Keanton, with a somewhat rueful air, and sprang across the little well with less than his promised activity.

Smeaton went first to show him the way, and to help him out if he fell in ; and his so doing gave some confidence to the poor statuary ; but he still besought his noble companion, even after they had both safely reached the little path, to remain with him till his young guide came. When this was

acceded to, he became much more composed, and hardly listened to the directions, repeated more than once, which Smeaton gave him regarding what he was to do at Keanton, so much was he occupied with the contemplation of the little well and the scene around. The moon had now risen higher, so high, indeed, as only just to catch the edge of the waters with a line of silver light ; but she displayed beautifully in her pale beams the small Gothic arch of stonework, let, as it were, into the face of the rock. The deep tank or well at the foot of this acclivity, received the bright and healing fountain, from some spot ten or twelve feet below the surface. The light through the half-opened door showed the interior of this little cell with its watery flooring and part of the passage beyond ; and the eye could perceive upon the stone door itself how skilfully the workmen had marked out the freestone into divisions, so as to render it like a piece of solid masonry.

The effect had been rendered perfect by the exhalations from the fountain, which had tinted it with many hues of green, and red, and yellow.

“ I don’t see how one could open it from without,” said Van Noost, after gazing for a moment. “ The well is so deucedly in the way, though I see the place where the key-hole must be well enough.”

“ I would advise you not to try, Van Noost,” said Smeaton, with a smile. “ Your legs are not long enough to stretch across. I think mine would do very well.”

“ Ay, noble lord, I did not cast myself,” replied the statuary. “ Gad’s life! if we could do that, we might see strange changes, according to men’s taste. Some of your stumpy, balustrade fellows would turn out Apollos ; and many a long-legged Antinous would become a clumsy Vulcan. I am as lengthy in mind as you in limb, my Lord, and could leap over mountains, if—if—”

“ If the body were not heavier than the soul,” said the young Earl, kindly ; for he saw that the good man spoke somewhat warmly. “ It is not your fault if Nature made you spread forth broad instead of running up tall. Some stones are made into a cupola, others into a column ; but they have no choice in the matter, and each had better be satisfied with his condition. You have one advantage of me, however. You can make the figures of other men in a better mould than fortune gave to yourself, and I cannot.”

“ It would be difficult in your case, my lord,” replied Van Noost, well pleased. “ I only long for quiet times to take a statue of your lordship as a dancing faun.”

“ Spare me that ! Spare me that !” cried Smeaton, laughing. “ The faun had not a good reputation in times of old, nor the dancers in the present day ; and, goodsooth ! I would rather not appear in public in either character.—But methinks this boy,

who is to be your guide, is long in coming, and I am somewhat anxious to get back into the house again."

"Ay, I can fancy that," replied Van Noost, "if that pretty lady who was with you this morning be within. Do you know, my noble Lord, you must set a guard upon your eyes, if you would not have all the villagers commenting upon your soft sentiments? Why here was the old sexton, Mattocks, saying what a handsome couple you would make; and only thinking of burying you both all the time, though he talked of nothing worse than marriage."

"It would be a pity to stop them," answered Smeaton. "I should imagine they have little to think of; and a marriage or a funeral must be a God-send to the gossips of the place.—But now, my good Van Noost, remember, when you are at Keanton you must be very discreet, or you may get into trouble. Keep the eyes of the people off you as much as possible,

and mind not to exercise too much in dangerous places."

"But bless your lordship, what am I to do?" exclaimed Van Noost. "You know mine is an active, bustling spirit; and, if I am not to exercise my genius upon lead, I shall probably exercise it upon something else. Good faith, I must dabble a little in my old trade, even if it be but in casting little leaden figures of soldiers and dairy-maids, hand-in-hand, for the benefit of the children of the tenantry."

"I did not speak of that exercise of your genius," replied Smeaton. "Cast as many leaden figures as you will, my friend. They can find you a cauldron as big as a witch's, I dare say; and you can set up a shop in the old courtyard. But eschew politics, Van Noost, and keep your hand from the treason-pot. You have put your fat in peril already, it would appear, my good friend. So keep quiet till the danger has passed away.—Here comes the boy, I think."

It was as he supposed ; and, though the boy, with very limited instructions, had expected only to see one person to guide, so that he was somewhat puzzled on finding two, Van Noost was soon placed under his guidance ; and, while Smeaton returned to the house to enjoy for a short space longer sweet converse with Emmeline, the worthy statuary moved away to seek for the pony he had left tied under a tree. It was easily found ; for, having been left at some distance, it had escaped all notice from the soldiery ; but the beast was tired with its exertions during the day, and was very willing to go at such a pace as suited the convenience of the young guide.

The way seemed to Van Noost interminably long, as all new ways do in the dark ; but the distance was in reality by no means very great ; and at length the boy, who had chatted very freely with the statuary as they went, pointed to the entrance of a road between two deep hedge-

rows, telling Van Noost to follow it straight on, and it would lead him to Keanton House.

“There are seven gates to open,” said the boy, “and about half a mile over the turf. You cannot miss the road, for it is all straight.”

Van Noost, however, did contrive to miss the road ; for when he came upon the turf, the moon had gone down ; the tracks of the road had disappeared ; and, instead of going on as his face was pointed, he turned a little to the left, which led him away from the object he had in view. The summer sun, however, soon befriended him ; first by showing him, in the grey twilight of the early morning that he had gone wrong, and then, by greater light, enabling him to get right. He had to turn back nearly a mile, however, the road lying all the way over smooth, green turf, covering the gentle undulations of the country, with no indications of a path, but here and there the track of cart-

wheels in the soft sward, or the points of a horse's feet. Van Noost was led on, indeed, and in the right direction, by the sight of some fine old trees rising up over the edge of a hollow at the distance of about a mile, and some chimneys, and sharp-pointed gables and roofs, breaking the rounded lines of the foliage.

The sun was just up when the statuary, passing through the elms and oaks, came in sight of the whole building, a fine old irregular mass of brickwork, somewhat like an antique French chateau, with tall masses of no-styled architecture, small windows very irregularly disposed, and a somewhat superfluous number of doors. Grey and yellow lichens and green moss covered the walls and the eaves ; the ivy ran up many of the square, tower-like masses ; and the house-leek might be seen dropping over the edges of the lower roofs. Ten or twelve tall elms, loaded with rooks' nests, at one corner of the building, marked where the esplanade began which ran be-

fore the principal *façade* ; but, on the side next to Van Noost, appeared a large farm-yard, surrounded by a low wall and thickly littered with straw, on which reposed a number of cows, promising a plentiful supply of milk, butter, and cheese. The early-rising and consequential cock was strutting about in his gaudy livery ; the white, black, and grey ladies of his seraglio were wandering in quest of food. Numerous were ducks in a pond at one corner, and a troop of geese, waddling and curtseying and bending their heads, came forward to taste the morning air, and crop the green grass upon the downs. But no human being was to be seen : man was absent from the picture ; and Van Noost raised his eye from window to window, to discover any signs of life within, but in vain,

“ This must be Keanton,” he said to himself. “ It is just the sort of place ; but they seem rather late risers here for country people. If they had been at the

Ridotto last night, or at the Water theatre, or at the Italians, they might well be lagging in bed ; but here, where they have nothing to do but lie down and go to sleep when the sun sets, they might very well get up when he rises, methinks.—Hark !”

The sounds which had called his attention increased ; and round the corner by the rookery, came a young peasant-lad in his broad hat and his yellow frock, whistling gaily. All Van Noost’s weariness and wandering were forgotten in the joyful sight ; and, whipping on his pony, he rode up to the lad, asking him if there was nobody up in the house.

“I cannot tell,” replied the youth, with a strong Devonshire accent. “Master Thompson at the farm is up.”

As he spoke, he looked very earnestly at Van Noost, and there was a sly, quiet, inquiring glance of the eye, which did not at all harmonize with his gay, thoughtless aspect the moment before, as he came whistling along. It was not alone shrewd,

but suspicious; and Van Noost said to himself—

“Ay, ay, these tenants are all well drilled not to endanger their master’s interests by any indiscretion. Now, I will answer for it, there would be no slight difficulty in getting any straightforward answer from this good youth. I’ll try.”

“So, the farmer’s name is Master Thompson,” he said, aloud. “A very good name, too. Pray, what is your name, my lad?”

“What is yours?” said the young man, looking him point blank in the face.

“That is not the question,” answered Van Noost. “I asked what yours is !”

“Then that is not the question either,” replied the lad; “but if you be the gentleman come from Exeter, you ought to know my name.”

“I have not been in Exeter,” replied Van Noost; “and even if I had, I don’t

see how I should know your name, when I never saw your face before. If you carried it written upon your forehead like a certain old lady of Babylon, one might know something about it."

"To be sure," replied the lad; "and so should I know something about yours. I am not fond of answering questions, master; so, if you have come to speak to me from Exeter, you had better speak out. Ballimoree!"

"Ballimoree!" exclaimed Van Noost, with surprise. "What in the name of fortune does Ballimoree mean?"

"It means good morning to you, master," said the young man, with a knowing nod of the head; and he walked away, without waiting for any further question.

"Ballimoree! Ballimoree!" mentally ejaculated Van Noost. "What the deuce does he mean by Ballimoree?"

And when he had looked after the young man for a minute or two, he turned his pony's head to see if he could discover the

farm-house which had been mentioned. It was by no means difficult to do so, for as soon as he had passed the rookery, it became visible, with a number of small houses and cottages, in a little wild dell to the right.

At the door of the farm-house, he found a stout, elderly man of a very frank and open countenance, and having his hands in his pockets, according to the usually prescribed form of English farmers. Riding up straight towards him, Van Noost considered, as he went, how he should address him, and make his wishes known.

“The noble lord,” he thought, “said I was to ask either for Master Jennings or Master Thompson; but then I was not told to say Ballimoree. I was to inform them that I came from the *River Head*, and to bid them give me shelter, food, and protection. It was to Jennings I was to say that; but perhaps the pass-word at Master Thompson’s may be, Ballimoree. I’ll essay it.”

And riding up to the fence before the farmhouse, he hallooed out—

“Your name is Thompson, sir, I believe.—Ballimoree.”

“My name is Thompson, sir,” answered the farmer; “but not Ballimoree. What is Ballimoree?”

“Upon my life, I don’t know,” answered Van Noost, frankly; “but a young lad I met up near the house said ‘Ballimoree’ to me, and told me that it meant good morning.”

“He was funning you, sir,” replied the man. “He is a bit of an Exeter lad, is Dick Peerly, and they are all full of their jokes. Pray what is your business with me?”

“I was to tell you, Mr. Thompson, that I come from the *River Head*,” replied Van Noost, laying particular emphasis on the last words; “and as I am anxious for some quiet and repose, you or Mr. Jennings are to give me shelter, protection, and food for a time.”

The man's whole manner changed in a moment.

"You shall be right welcome, sir," he said. "It will be better that you should speak with Master Jennings; but, in the meantime, pray come in and have some refreshment. The cows will be milked in a minute; but if you like ale and bacon better, we have as good as any in the land.—Ballimoree! what could he mean by Ballimoree?—Pray come in, sir—pray come in. Give me your horse's bridle. I'll have him put up. A pretty pony, 'pon my life; but he seems to have had enough of it for once."

"Ay, poor beast, he is as tired as his master," returned Van Noost, walking towards the house. "He never calculated upon such a ride, nor I either."

The farmer pointed to a room on the left side of the entrance of his house, led the pony round to the back, and returned to his guest after a moment or two, with a bouncing, rosy, country maid-

servant, bringing in the materials for a hearty breakfast ; but that word, “ Ballimoree,” seemed to puzzle him as much as or more than, it had done Van Noost ; and he continued murmuring it to himself, even while the woman was in the room. As soon as she was gone, however, and he had pressed his guest to take some food, he returned to the subject openly, asking—

“ Pray, sir, what sort of a lad was this, that said ‘ Ballimoree’ to you ? I saw nobody go up that way but Dick Peerly.”

“ Oh, he was a lad of nineteen or twenty, with flaxen curly hair and eyes rather close together,” Van Noost replied. “ He came up at first whistling like a merry innocent sort of noodle ; but, when he began to speak, he looked cute enough.”

“ Ay, he is a dead hand at whistling,” said the farmer. “ It must be Dick Peerly ; and ‘cute enough he certainly is. I don’t half like him ; and, if it had not

been to oblige my cousin Sam, I would not have had him on the farm at all. I'll ask him what he means by Ballimoree."

"Oh, I dare say, it was only sauciness," observed Van Noost; and so the affair dropped for the time.

Shortly after, Master Jennings was sent for from the great house, where, it would appear, he acted as a sort of steward. He was a grave old man in a brown suit, and was very courteous and polite to Van Noost, as soon as he was told the words which the other had been instructed to address to him. But he and farmer Thompson made many inquiries after their young lord, and expressed great pleasure to hear that he was in their neighbourhood.

"I think he might very well return and take possession openly, sir," said Master Jennings, "though things are looking rather bad just now. Yet, from those who know, I have heard that he is in no danger. However, that is not our affair; and,

of course, we shall not say we know anything of his being in the country. You had better come up with me to the great house, and we will soon get a bed ready for you, in case you would like to lie down after your long ride. Anything we can do to make you comfortable, I am sure shall be done."

"I want nothing," replied the statuary, but some clay, a great cauldron, and as much lead as I can get; and I will show you one or two funny things."

"Anything you want, sir, shall be got directly," said Master Jennings; "but the lead may be somewhat difficult—for I don't think there is much of it down about here. I will show you the way, if you please, sir."

"Have with you, good Mr. Jennings," exclaimed Van Noost, with a theatrical air, as far as the stiffness of his hind quarters would permit of his assuming one; and, after thanking his host of the farm-house

for his courteous hospitality, he walked out towards the mansion above.

“Ballimoree!” said farmer Thompson. “I wonder what the deuce he could mean by that. I’ll find it out.”

CHAPTER IV.

THE account given by Richard Newark to Emmeline and Smeaton, after the latter had returned, comprised nothing that the reader does not know ; but he told his tale with great humour, and even some degree of wit, which called a laugh from Smeaton, and made Emmeline smile, although the former found matter in it for much consideration, and the latter for much alarm.

It was now apparent that the moment

he resumed his real name and station, Smeaton would be subject to annoyance and inconvenience, if not worse, from the zeal of the Devonshire magistrates ; and, after some thought, he resolved to write to Lord Stair, explaining his position and begging him to assist in removing the difficulties with which he was surrounded.

“I am determined,” he said to himself, “to take no part in the foolish struggles which seem likely to take place in this land, and which I feel convinced can end in nothing but the destruction of those who promote them. Undoubtedly, I look upon the Stuart race of Kings as lawful sovereigns of the country, and did wish that the late Queen had lived long enough to restore her brother quietly to the throne of his ancestors. But nations have rights as well as monarchs ; and it is somewhat more than doubtful to me whether the great mass of the reasoning people of this country are not strongly opposed to the

return of their ancient Kings. I will take no share in this business."

Richard Newark himself had some questions to ask, as well as the tale to tell; and he put them, as usual, somewhat abruptly.

"Well, Colonel," he said, after some conversation, "now tell us all about the priest's chamber."

"I am afraid I must not, my young friend," replied Smeaton. "That is another man's secret, communicated to me for my own good; and I must not betray it."

"Ah, you won't trust me," said Richard, in a sad tone. "I wonder why it is people will not trust me. I can be as faithful and true as any one."

"Indeed, I would trust you willingly," replied Smeaton, "with anything that is merely my own; but this secret I ought not to divulge either to you or to this dear lady."

“ Well, then, I’ll try you,” said Richard. “ Are you, or are you not, the Earl of Eskdale ?”

“ I am,” replied Smeaton, at once. “ I tell you, without the slightest hesitation, Richard ; but I beg you not to divulge the fact till I have taken measures to effect my safety.”

“ I was sure of it,” cried Richard. “ I was quite sure of it. Poor colonels of horse don’t have such beautiful swords to give away ; and, besides, I suppose, there is something in a lord that makes him different from other men. None of you have two heads, I think, nor four arms, nor eight legs ; but yet, lack a-day, there must be some difference ; for I said to myself, soon after you came here, ‘ That man is different from the rest of them.’ ”

Emmeline looked up in Smeaton’s face with a smile, while her cousin spoke, as if she would fain have said—

“ I thought so too.”

She spoke not, however ; and Richard

ran out of the room in his wild way to see what all the servants were "making of it," as he termed it. During his absence, which did not last many minutes, words of mutual tenderness were of course uttered by the lovers; but other matters were also to be spoken of besides their young affection; and Smeaton communicated to Emmeline all that had transpired between himself and old Mrs. Culpepper, expressing, at the same time, his belief that she might be fully trusted.

The evening then passed quietly for more than an hour; at the end of which time, the trampling of horses, and the voice of Sir John Newark, were heard. He did not come into the small saloon for several minutes after he had entered the house; and, somewhat to Smeaton's surprise, neither Emmeline nor Richard Newark went out to greet him. But they knew him and his ways better than Smeaton did. The interval was occupied in speaking a few words to Mrs. Culpepper,

which seemed to be rather those of inquiry than anything else ; but the replies he received were apparently satisfactory ; and he entered the saloon with a pleasant and half laughing air. The whole circumstances of the evening were discussed : he gave his own version of what had occurred, both at Exeter and at Aleton : he inquired minutely into the events which had taken place at the Manor House during his absence ; and he ended by saying—

“ Well, Colonel, this is a fortunate escape from that which might have proved to be a somewhat unpleasant affair ; and the mistake these men have fallen into regarding the flight of the Earl of Eskdale, who has never fled from them at all, will put you quite at your ease, for some time, and save you, I trust, from farther annoyance.”

He glanced his eye towards Emmeline and Richard, as he spoke, as if to indicate that it might be better to enter into no

more particulars in their presence ; and Smeaton very readily took the hint ; for, to say truth, he had more confidence in Richard's kindness than in his discretion.

When the two younger members of the family had retired for the night, Smeaton remained, for a few minutes, to give Sir John an opportunity of explaining himself farther ; but Sir John Newark did not think it necessary to say much more upon the events of that day, merely observing, in a careless and somewhat light tone—

“I hear your lady-wife has quite recovered ; and I suppose she may soon be expected to join you.”

“You are labouring under a mistake, my dear sir,” replied Smeaton, at once. “I am quite wifeless.”

“Why, I thought,” exclaimed Sir John Newark, “that your wife was mentioned between us only the other day.” And he assumed, very tolerably, an air of incredulous surprise.

“I beg your pardon, Sir John,” returned Smeaton. “You asked after Lady Eskdale, and I replied that she was better ; but the name of wife was never mentioned between us. I spoke, indeed, fully with regard to my mother’s illness ; but she being the only Countess of Eskdale living, I might naturally assume that your words referred to her. I am a single man, I beg to assure you.”

“Well, my lord, a happy condition,” remarked Sir John. “Heaven forbid that I should attribute bigamy to you, or saddle you even with a single wife, when you have not got one. I would advise you, however, as you have no wife, to get rid of Keanton ; for troublous times are coming, I can see very clearly ; and, although you have contrived to keep possession of the estate so long, I fear very much you would not be able to hold it longer, if there should be anything like a disturbance in the country.”

“I trust that will not be the case,” said

Smeaton, "although I should not, of course, object to the sale of the place if it could be effected at a fair price. Yet there are memories which cling about our old ancestral homes, from the influence of which we cannot well divest our hearts. I know nothing of this Keanton, though I was born there. I recollect not one stick or stone about it—have very rarely heard it spoken of, except for the purpose of giving me information which might be useful to me in any unexpected change of circumstances. Nevertheless, Sir John, so strongly is man's weak heart bound by the fine chain of association, that to put my hand to the deed which conveyed it to others, would cost me a pang, severer, perhaps, than any other, except that of seeing it wrested from myself and my mother without that compensation which might secure comfort and happiness to her old age."

"I fear that the latter may be the case ere long," replied Sir John, shaking his

head gravely. "From all I have heard this day, and all I have seen, I judge that many months will not pass before we witness convulsions which will be beneficial to the winning party, but utterly ruinous to the great body of the English gentry. For my part, I intend immediately to settle my whole estates absolutely on my son, in such a manner that he could not be deprived of them unless he were to take a part which his youth renders impossible. They shall, in short, be no longer mine, but his ; so doubtful am I of the future. As to Keanton," he continued, with an easy and unconcerned air, "I have no doubt that many of the neighbouring gentry would be found ready to pay a reasonable price for it. I myself should be most willing to come forward and offer you such a sum, but for the views I have expressed. I have always a certain amount of money in reserve ; but that might be needful to me in case of any reverses ; and it is not sufficient to pay a just price for such

an estate as Keanton. Nevertheless, if at any time you or your lady-mother should wish by way of mortgage to raise a sum for any present purposes, command me ; and you will find me delighted to testify my friendship for you by something better than mere words."

Smeaton made some courteous reply of no great value ; and Sir John continued — " I speak of course merely in case you do not sell ; but, as I have before observed, there are many wealthy country gentlemen around us here, who would be right glad to purchase, I am sure : amongst the rest, Sir James Mount, an excellent old man, and generally considered a person of great ability. Of his genius, I have my doubts ; but of his high honour and good intentions, none. He was talking to me, this very morning, both of yourself and Keanton. As soon as it came out that the suspicions of the magistrates were directed towards you, and that they supposed you were dwelling in my house, he asked me

privately if such were really the case. Of course I did not betray your secret even to him. He then went on to speak of Kean-ton ; and it seemed to me that it was a possession he had always coveted."

"He knew my father and my mother in early years," replied Smeaton. "I have often heard him mentioned. Indeed, I have seen him, I think, but am not very sure."

"He is most anxious to see you," returned Sir John ; "and indeed, if you think fit to sell the place, I believe he would be found a ready purchaser. I was sorry to disappoint the good old man ; for he expressed so eager a desire to greet his old friend's son, that I could have found it in my heart to bring him to my house to-night, had it not been that I look upon another man's secrets entrusted to me just as I should upon his purse if left in my care ; a thing which I am bound to return to him untouched."

Now Sir John Newark was well aware

that good Sir James Mount had not in reality a stiver at command, and that his passion for alteration and building had already compelled him to mortgage his estate. As Smeaton knew nothing of these circumstances, however, the suggestion would have excited no suspicion had it not been accompanied by profession of pure motives and honourable dealing, which he knew did not form the distinguishing characteristics of Sir John Newark's life.

“ I will think of this, Sir John,” he said ; “ and as to Sir James Mount's knowledge that I am your guest, I really do not see, so much as you seem to do, the great necessity for secrecy. I have explained to you that I have, substantially, nothing to fear, except, perhaps, a little inconvenience from zealous stupidity ; but I think, in a few days, I shall have removed all danger even of that ; for it is my intention to-morrow to write to Lord Stair begging him to exert

his influence in the proper course for enabling me to reside as long as I think fit in this country, upon the clear understanding that my residence here shall in no degree prove detrimental to the dynasty which he serves. At all events, Sir John, pray do not let my sojourn with you induce you for one moment to exclude any guests whom you might otherwise wish to receive ; for I cannot at all consent that your hospitality towards me should so embarrass you, and only regret that it has already produced so much disorder in your household. And now, with many thanks, good night."

Sir John shook him warmly by the hand ; and they parted—Smeaton retiring to his chamber, to think, if the truth must be told, more of Emmeline than of aught else ; and Sir John to consider his plans farther, under the aspect which they had now assumed.

Smeaton's carelessness as to discovery was not altogether pleasant to the knight, who

would willingly have seen his young guest more embarrassed; and he liked not at all the prospect of difficulties being removed from the course of the latter. .

“I must deal with this epistle to Lord Stair,” he said to himself. “It will never do to let Eskdale clear his feet of the birdlime altogether. But then again, in the meantime, I can work something, perhaps, out of the indiscretion of that foolish old man, Sir James Mount. It will be easy, as his my guest does not absolutely object to see him, to get them into such relations that some of the follies of Sir James may recoil upon the young Earl. If the old knight snaps at the bait of Kean-ton, I can advance the money on mortgage of the two estates. If he do not, he may help to bring about embarrassments which may make my young bird eager to get rid of what can but be a clog upon him. And yet this bachelorism of his is an unfortunate affair. If Emmeline were out of the way, it would all go well.

That however, cannot be ; but I must make myself sure at home."

And going to the hall-door, he called one of the servants, and bade the man send the housekeeper to him.

CHAPTER V.

THE events which immediately succeeded to those recorded in the last chapter, I must pass over somewhat rapidly ; for there was nothing that would much interest the reader in detail. Smeaton's letter to the Earl of Stair was written and despatched ; and it may be sufficient to say that it never reached its destination.

Sir John Newark, on the pretence of great courtesy and attention, hardly lost sight of his young guest for a moment, except

during the times when he was giving Richard instruction in the use of the sword. Smeaton thus had no opportunity whatever of speaking in private with Emmeline ; and the feelings of which the two were conscious, kept them more reserved when in the presence of others than they had been before those feelings became known to them. The restraint was very painful to both ; and day by day it became more irksome, till, with the impatience natural to youth—impatience that can never bide its time—Smeaton felt inclined to do anything rash to put an end to so oppressive a state of things. Richard, indeed, on the third day, afforded him some means of relief ; for, when they were practising in one of the old halls with the doors shut, the lad took advantage of a momentary pause for repose, to say—

“Ay, Colonel, you don’t talk to me about it ; but I know very well what is going on in your thumper.”

“What do you call my thumper, Richard?” demanded Smeaton, with a smile.

“Oh, folks ‘call it ‘heart,’” answered Richard, “though there is no meaning in that word, and a great deal in ‘thumper’; but what I mean is, that I know very well you are dreaming all this time about our dear little Emmeline. My father takes care that you shall not whisper sugar to her. So, if you have anything to say, you had better tell me; and I will say it for you, because I am sent out with her every day to walk, like Shock, the lap-dog. I may as well talk to her about you as anything else; for she is thinking about you all the time, and falling into such brown studies that, if you ask her what o’clock it is, she looks up in your face, and says, ‘Tuesday, I believe.’”

“I wish to Heaven I could speak to her alone for about half-an-hour,” observed Smeaton.

“Ay, you cannot do that,” returned

Richard Newark ; “and I must not help you ; for, if my father were once to find out that I did, there would be a south-westerly gale and an end of all ; but, if you will only tell me anything you want to say, I’ll say it for you, word for word, upon my honour.”

Smeaton had a great objection to confidants, though, in the countries which he had most inhabited, as well as in the plays and romances of the day, they were almost indispensable accessories to every love affair ; but there was something in his love for Emmeline too pure, too delicate, to suffer the idea of entrusting his thoughts towards her to any one. There was no resource, however ; and many a message to her did he send by her cousin, cautiously worded indeed, but expressive in some degree of the feelings in his heart.

On the same day that the above conversation occurred, a little after the hour of noon, a gay cavalcade appeared before the house. Sir John Newark affected

surprise and some alarm at first ; but then, suddenly perceiving that it was Sir James Mount, he left his young guest to say whether he would be present during that worthy gentleman's visit, or not.

Smeaton consented to receive him, without the slightest hesitation, and the moment Sir James entered the room, recognized a person whom he had seen at the small court of the exiled Stuarts in Lorraine, though but for a few minutes. The worthy magistrate, however, advanced at once towards him, and, taking him respectfully by the hand, congratulated him on his return to England, not indeed addressing him by his real title, for Sir James piqued himself on his policy, but yet with marks of reverence which the old Tory courtier showed to nothing under the estate of a lord. His language also was so circum-ambulatory and reiterative, that it might have puzzled a very keen spy, unacquainted with his peculiar style, to make out what on earth he meant; and indeed he rather

flattered himself that he spoke, on all occasions of difficulty, in such a way as to be utterly unintelligible to ears not initiated.

“I am truly delighted—delighted—delighted,” he said, “to see you, sir, in what may be considered your native country—country—country; and although, habit being second nature, which is sometimes better—better—better than first—for why, if second thoughts are best, should not nature—nature—nature be in the same predicament?—you may consider other lands—other lands—other lands to be more your indigenous—indigenous—indigenous soil, nevertheless, we may felicitate ourselves upon having restored to our country a distinguished personage—personage—personage, who, like a borrowed gem—borrowed gem, illuminated a foreign crown—crown—crown.”

Smeaton, though somewhat surprised, replied courteously, that he was exceedingly glad to see a gentleman whom he

understood to be an old friend of his family; and the conversation went on for about half an hour, as easily as it could do with the sort of hurdle-race talking of the worthy magistrate. In the course of that conversation, Sir John Newark took a small but not unimportant part, throwing in a few words here and there, to guide Sir James Mount in the direction which he wished him to take. By his management, though that management was not very apparent, not only was the subject of Keanton introduced, but Sir James was led to expatiate upon the advantages of that estate, its close proximity to his own, its charming sites for building, and the great improvements which might be effected if it had the advantage of a resident proprietor. Smeaton thought, with a smile—

“The worthy knight seems really anxious to purchase it; and one knows not, in the state of affairs here, whether it might not be better to humour him.”

Next came a cordial invitation to Mount Place, seconded by some such words as—

“I trust you will not be under the least apprehension, sir, in doing me the honour—the honour—the honour of returning my visit; for I am very discreet—very discreet—very discreet. The place shall be kept quite solitary—solitary—solitary for the next three weeks—three weeks, to wait your convenience. Your excellent lady-mother—mother—mother would assure you of my discretion; and in case you should be desirous—desirous—desirous of taking a little—a little peep at Keanton, you can do so—do so—do so in half an hour, with great privacy. The road is quite lonely, through quiet lanes—quiet lanes. No Peeping Toms there; all still and comfortable; not a village or a hamlet on the way; and you can see what is going on—what is going on—what is going on, without any risk.”

Smeaton declared that his kind friends entertained more apprehensions for his

safety than he did himself, feeling that he had in fact nothing to fear beyond a short, temporary inconvenience.

“All danger even of that,” he added, “will be over in a few days; and I shall therefore have the greatest pleasure in waiting upon Sir James Mount before my departure from Devonshire.”

“Care and caution, noble sir—care and caution—care and caution,” said the worshipful gentleman, “are always highly expedient under all circumstances—circumstances—circumstances. We can never tell what may turn up to-morrow—turn up to-morrow—turn up to-morrow; and therefore it is better to take care what we are about to-day.”

“Very true, indeed,” replied Smeaton, with a smile. And, with this aphorism fresh upon his lips, Sir James Mount took his leave, never doubting that he had made a very favorable impression.

Emmeline had been in the room during

the above conversation, but had not received the slightest notice from Sir James Mount, who was too much taken up with the important secret entrusted to him to think of anything else for the time. Sir John Newark, however, went out with his visitor to see him to his horse's back, according to the courtesies of those times ; and Smeaton immediately advanced towards his fair companion with some laughing comment upon the peculiarities of the old man's manners. Emmeline, however, held up her finger, as if to call his attention to what she had to say, and then whispered—

“ I wish I could speak with you !—Oh ! I wish I could speak with you ! Good Mrs. Culpepper came to me for an hour this morning before I rose. She is a friend to me, not a spy upon me, as Richard thinks, and I have much to tell you. Hush ! he is coming back ! ”

Smeaton drew a little farther from her ;

but yet, Emmeline could not altogether banish the eagerness from her look ; and the eye of Sir John Newark rested on her fair face the instant he entered the room. He took no notice, however, if he observed anything, but only said in a gay tone,

“ Come, Emmeline, let us ride out this breezy day. Colonel Smeaton, will you accompany us ? ”

“ With all my heart ! ” replied the young nobleman ; “ but I must put on other apparel . ”

“ So must I , ” said Emmeline .

“ Well, then, to your toilet , ” cried Sir John. “ I will order the horses in the meanwhile. It needs a good gallop to shake off the load of worthy Sir James Mount’s words, he piles them upon us so rapidly. Quick, Colonel Smeaton ! The horses will not be long . ”

The moment they were gone, Sir John Newark hurried towards that part of the house inhabited by the servants ; and, or-

dering the horses as he passed, entered the room of the housekeeper. Mrs. Culpepper was busily engaged with an account-book ; but she rose when her master entered, and laid down the pen.

For an instant, Sir John Newark gazed at her in silence, with a look not altogether placable ; but the old lady bore it with perfect calmness, knowing very well the man she had to deal with.

“I have observed something I do not like,” said Sir John, after he had seen that the door was completely closed ; but there he paused, and turned his eyes to the ground, as if meditating what he should say next.

“Pray, what may it be, sir ?” asked the old lady, after waiting a moment. “Nothing in my conduct, I hope.”

“No,” said her master ; “no. I think you would take care ; and yet there was a look of consciousness on Emmeline’s face just now, when I returned to her and this young man, which has awakened a doubt.”

“Indeed!” said Mrs. Culpepper. “What could cause that? Had they been talking long?”

“Only for a moment,” replied Sir John Newark; “and I heard him laughing just as I quitted the room.”

“Then, depend upon it, there was nothing to be afraid of,” rejoined Mrs. Culpepper. “People don’t laugh when they are talking secrets. Do you think he was laughing at anything you had said or done? For then very likely the lady might look conscious, thinking you might judge she had taken part in what was offensive to you.”

It was happily turned; and, after a moment’s thought, her master answered—

“It may be so. Not, indeed, that it was me he laughed at, but, probably, the old man, Sir James Mount.”

“The old fool!” muttered Mrs. Culpepper, between her teeth. “I would have him as little as possible in my house, if I had

one. He is sure to make mischief, if he meddles with any one's affairs."

A dark smile came upon Sir John Newark's face ; and he thought, though he did not say it,

"That is what I desire."

There is no tool in a knave's hands so useful sometimes, as the innocent mischief-maker who is dangerous to honest people ; and, although Sir James Mount's inquisitiveness and indiscretion were usually annoying and sometimes embarrassing to his more astute neighbour, yet he had often been rendered very serviceable to Sir John Newark's plans and purposes. Sir John was very confident in his own abilities, in his knowledge of the world and of the man ; and he did not in the least fear to employ him as a tool in any work where it was necessary to lead others into difficulty. He seemed however, to ponder on his good housekeeper's words ; but his mind soon reverted to the former subject of his thoughts ; and he said with a sterner air :

“ I hope you have relaxed none of the care which I enjoined upon you, Culpepper. People occasionally get negligent of such charges in the course of time ; and, if I find that such is the case, I must have fresher service for the same purpose. So beware.”

“ I don't think you have cause to blame me, Sir John,” replied Mrs. Culpepper, in her usual quiet tone. “ I have performed exactly everything that I promised to perform. I never undertook to watch when *you* were in the house ; but when you were absent, or when I am with her at any distance from your own sight, I will undertake to say that there is not a step she takes, and hardly a word she utters, that is unknown to me. If there is anything between her and this gentleman who is here, the fault is your own, not mine ; first in bringing him hither, and secondly in not watching sufficiently what was passing under your own eyes.”

“ You are mistaken, woman,” retorted

Sir John, sharply. “I *do* watch with care that you little know. When did I ever neglect to watch?”

“During the four or five first days that he was here,” answered Mrs. Culpepper, putting a pickling-pot on one of the shelves behind her, and not losing her composure in the slightest degree. The second or third day he was alone with her for an hour in the saloon while you were talking with Martin, the horse-couper, about some horses you wanted to buy—”

“And other much more important things,” added Sir John significantly.

“I know nothing about that,” replied the housekeeper. “All I know is, that they were there together; but I do not believe that any harm is done as yet; for, from words and actions which I have heard and remarked, I judge they have said little to each other. The conversation I speak of, I contrived to break in upon three times, though I had no business to meddle with it, you being in the house.

I wonder he is not smitten, indeed ; for she is as pretty a creature as ever eye saw ; but then I suppose it is that he has seen a great number of finer-dressed beauties in foreign lands where you say he has been ; and, if he is poor himself, I suppose he will want money, which he is not likely to get here.—Indeed, he cannot tell that there ever was a chance of it. These foreign soldier-captains are not the people to fall in love with ladies without fortunes. No, no, that is not likely.”

She shook her head gravely, as she spoke these words in a moralising tone ; and Sir John smiled again as he felt his suspicions give way before the old woman’s arguments.

“ There is much truth in what you say, my good lady,” he observed ; “ but be pleased to remember that no caution can be too great. I had my own reasons for bringing this gentleman here ; but I have been deceived in one particular, ay, and helped to deceive myself. They told me

he was married—at least, gave me to understand so. Now, however, I find that he is not ; and, although I do not think he is of a mind, nor in a condition, to do so foolish a thing as to wed a penniless girl, when he might do better, yet I will not have the slightest care neglected to ensure that he has no opportunity whatever of filling her ear with lover's prattle. I have told you Emmeline must marry Richard. It is necessary to me and to both of them."

"Very well, Sir John," answered the housekeeper, drily. "I have no interest in the matter."

"I will give you an interest," said Sir John, laying his finger on Mrs. Culpepper's arm. "Now mark me : I promise you, upon my honour, that the very day which sees Richard's marriage to Emmeline, I will give you one hundred guineas."

"Ay, now you *do* give me an interest," answered the housekeeper, with a brighter face ; "but you will have a hard matter to

bring it about Sir John, Master Richard is so very young—two years younger than the lady Emmeline, herself—and then you know again that he is really younger than his years. It is true, the young lady likes him well enough to marry him, I dare say ; and, if he were but to fall in love with her, as I dare say he will bye and bye—for if you keep them always caged up together what can they do ?—she will like him better still. As to this gentleman here, I don't think there is anything in it. I must have seen it, I must have known it. They cannot hoodwink me, though they might blind you."

"How happens it your eyes are so much sharper than mine?" asked Sir John, with a sneer. "I should like to know your secret, if it is so."

"How happens it !" echoed the housekeeper. "First, because I am a woman, and next because you have a great stake in the matter. Men never see these things ; and, when suspicions come across them, al-

ways fix upon the wrong person ; and then, when they have much at stake, they are sure to be blind altogether, or to see crooked. I have not lived sixty years in the world for nothing, Sir John ; and I know men and women both, well."

She shook her head oracularly as she spoke ; and, although in self-confidence there is something rather annoying to others, yet there is something very impressive too. If a person possessed of it have any talents, it is sure to double them in the estimation of others, while it may treble them in his own. Thus, at all events, something is gained. Even a fool does not suffer by that possession ; for, if it does nothing else, it serves to cover his folly from the eyes of more modest fools than himself. Sir John Newark knew Mrs. Culpepper to be nearly as acute as she represented herself ; and he took the rest for granted upon her own showing.

With renewed injunctions, then, to watch

everything that passed, not only during his absence, but when he was in the house, he left her ; and the old lady took up her account-book again, murmuring to herself, “The knave ! He thinks that a hundred guineas will do everything.”

CHAPTER VI.

SEVERAL days passed ; and the time elapsed which was requisite to bring an answer from London to Smeaton's letter addressed to Lord Stair. But none arrived ; and rumours were thick and busy in the country, of dangerous proceedings in the north of England, and in Scotland. In the immediate neighbourhood of Ale Manor, however, the public mind seemed more quiet and tranquil. Some of the magistrates had relapsed into that careless indif-

ference from which the intelligence of great dangers had aroused them ; those, of a firmer and more consistent character, were tranquil from a sense of readiness and preparation for any event ; and others, more keen, astute, and active, were vigorously carrying on the measures which they had previously resolved to take, but with as much quiet secrecy as decision.

In the interior of Ale Manor House, the days passed almost without incident. Both Emmeline and Smeaton saw that they were watched, and put the greatest restraint upon their actions, words, and looks, that was possible with a courteous and kindly demeanour to each other.

Mrs. Culpepper glided about as usual ; was seen here and seen there, when nobody expected her ; and, by her quiet and demure manner, satisfied even Sir John Newark that she was obeying his orders implicitly.

Richard Newark was the only one who enlivened the scene with little agitations.

From time to time, in his rash, wild way, and with his figurative, but not very choice, language, he would touch so close on the well-concealed feelings of the lovers as to alarm them both, and then, darting gaily away to some other theme, leave them scathless. He kept his father in some anxiety, too ; for a greater portion than ever of his careless, almost reckless, spirit seemed to have entered into him. He contrived to tumble out of a boat into the water far out in the bay, and might have been drowned, as there was nobody in the skiff with him, had not swimming been acquired so early, and practised so continually, that it was almost as natural to him as walking. He burst a fowling-piece, also, by putting in a double charge in a moment of forgetfulness. But he escaped without injury, and only mourned over his shattered gun.

It is not to be supposed, however, that the restraint to which they were obliged to submit was otherwise than very painful to

Smeaton and Emmeline. They did not see where it was likely to terminate. It was natural that the male lover should bear this state of things with more impatience than the lady; for women, even in very early life, have a sort of prescience that their portion is to endure without murmuring. Smeaton was almost tempted to cast off all reserve and follow what he felt to be a rash and even a dangerous course. None know, but those who have experienced it, how unbearable it is to be constantly in the presence of a beloved object without the opportunity, even by a whispered word or a glance of love, to tell the feelings that are busy in the heart.

How this might have ended, and whether he might or might not have been hurried into any rashness had this state continued much longer, I cannot say; for, although he had been well drilled by adversity, by difficulties and by dangers, and was competent to deal as calmly as any man with most of the ordinary things of life, yet he

was impetuous by nature, and the sensations which he now experienced were so new and strange to him, that he could not bring them under any rule obtained from experience of the past. That state, however was not destined to last long ; for, on the fourth day after Sir James Mount's visit, as he sat in his room very early in the morning enjoying the splendid rising of the sun, and indulging the thoughts with which lovers vivify the morning beams, he heard a gentle tap at his door. No sound had previously disturbed the silence which had reigned throughout the house during the night ; no housemaid's pail had been heard clattering ; no ancient serving-man of matutinal habits had unbarred windows and opened doors ; and, without venturing to say aloud, " Come in," Smeaton rose to ascertain with his eyes who was his early visitor. He found good Mrs. Culpepper herself standing in the passage without ; but, as soon as she saw that he was up and dressed, she entered in silence with her

noiseless step and quietly closed the door behind her.

“I have wanted to see you, sir, for some time,” she said; “but Sir John Newark is all eyes; and I dare not let him perceive that I know anything at all of you for fear of spoiling everything. But I thought that old Nanny might very well come to see her boy, even in his bed-room; and so I got myself up early. There are strange stories running about the country, sir. They say, people are actually in arms in the north. Oh, Harry, have nothing to do with them; for this thing will never succeed, depend upon it. More than one half of the gentry, and most men of the middle station, are against it.”

“I have not the slightest intention, my dear Nanny, to take any part in these rash movements,” replied Smeaton. “I am quite as well aware of their hopelessness as you can be.”

“But I fear Sir John,” said the old woman. “I fear him very much. He is

just the man to keep out of all perils himself, and to put other people in for the purpose of seeing what he can get out of the spoil. I wish to Heaven you were away, pleasant as it is to see you. I wish you were in France again. Can you not go, and keep yourself quiet there?"

Smeaton shook his head with a faint and somewhat melancholy smile.

"I cannot go at present, Nanny," he said. "That is impossible. I have ties to this land now, more hard to break than those which bind me to any other."

"Can you not take her with you?" enquired the old woman, in a low tone. "Listen what I have devised for you. You love her. I know you love her; and she loves you. Take her with you; marry her under my lady's eye, and with her sanction; keep perfectly quiet, whatever takes place in England; and, when all is still again, demand to return and resume your rights; and I will so work here, while you are gone, that that dear child

shall have *her* rights too in spite of all the cunning of the cunningest man within the four seas."

"But how can it be managed?" asked Smeaton. "And will she go upon so sudden and unexpected a proposal?"

"Have you said nothing to her?" returned the housekeeper, with a look of surprise. "Have you not told her all your heart? I thought—I fancied—I felt sure on that day that you were so long alone together, that you must have spoken all that need be said. Why, besides the ride in the morning, you were walking up and down the terrace in the evening for more than two hours, with Dick sitting, whistling, upon a stone at a distance."

"She knows that I love her," replied Smeaton; "and I trust that she loves me; but it is a very different thing to promise me her hand at some future period, and to agree to fly with me to a foreign land at a very short notice. The motives, the objects, her own state and

condition here, the very necessity of her going, even if she did not go to be my wife, must all be explained to her ; and I have no opportunity of explaining. I see her not for a single instant during the day without witnesses ; and, though I pass up and down the stairs more frequently, perhaps, than is prudent, for the purpose of catching one stray passing word, I have never met her."

"That is because it is another staircase," observed the old woman. "You pass close by her every day ; but there is no door open on this side. Let me see," she continued, pressing her hand upon her eyes. "I think I can manage it for you ; but you must be very discreet. You know, I dare say, every corner of your sitting-room there beyond ; and you must have remarked a door, like a closet-door, always locked. It is a closet—a mere slip. It leads out into the passage close by the state room—behind which, is the priest's chamber. The priest's chamber is close to that of

Emmeline ; and she can come out of her own room into the same passage. To-night, when you come to bed, you shall find somewhere or another—let me see where I will put it.—Yes, that will do. —You will find, on the upper shelf of that cupboard, there in the corner, the key of the closet which leads to the passage. To-morrow morning early, before any one else is up, rise and go through the closet to the state room. You shall find Emmeline there—or she will come very soon. But mind you do not linger long together, and do not make any noise. Speak low—tread softly—and, on no account, open the way into the priest's chamber ; for that would be heard to a certainty by him who sleeps below. You must get her to decide speedily ; for the clouds are gathering fast, and I would fain you were gone.”

“ If I am not to stay with her long,” replied Smeaton, “ it is very probable that I may not be able to explain all at once.”

“Then you must get her to come back the next morning,” said the old housekeeper ; “for you must not stay long together—half an hour at the utmost—even if you rise at five. Remember, there are people up in the house always before six ; and no one can tell where they may wander. This is a strange household, sir, where every servant is a spy upon the other, and the master a spy upon all. It needs skilful doings ; but I so contrive that often, in reporting to him what I do, the other people do just what I desire. They tell him that I am prying here and prying there, whenever he is absent, and am in all sorts of rooms and places, as if I was mistress of the house. That is just what he wants ; and though, now and then, when he catches me creeping about, and any one is present, he speaks sharply as if he were angry—it is but a pretence, which no one knows better how to make. I *do* tell him almost everything that happens ; but that *almost* covers all I wish to hide. I do him

no wrong, because he has no right in this house ; and I always keep the means in my own hands of baffling him when I please. If he knew it, I dare say I should soon be found down the deep draw-well in the garden ; but he shall not know it till I am safe beyond his reach."

"Then I may trust to find Emmeline there," said Smeaton, with a joyful heart.

"Yes, I think so," replied the house-keeper, in a more doubtful tone than he liked. "She will never refuse to go, surely. I will persuade her, somehow ; and love will take part with me. Oh, yes, she will come, I am sure. But now I will go ; and, before to-morrow morning, I must contrive to have the locks well oiled and the key placed for you.—Good bye, my dear boy. Be upon your guard against whatever Sir John proposes ; for you cannot tell what scheme may be at the bottom of anything he says or does."

I must not pause to notice all the min-

gled feelings which occupied the heart of the young nobleman after the old housekeeper had left him. They were agitating enough ; and, though her words were well calculated to encourage hope of the speedy fulfilment of his warmest desires, yet they plunged him in thoughtful reveries during the day, which did not escape the keen eye of Sir John Newark. Smeaton saw, however, that his absent mood, and grave and thoughtful countenance, were remarked ; and he turned suspicion from the course he feared it might take, by expressing much surprise that he had received no answer from Lord Stair. Emmeline, too, marked the change in his demeanour, and was somewhat anxious, if the truth must be told ; but, for her, an explanation was coming very soon.

I wish that I could, but fear that I cannot, convey to the mind of the reader the feelings with which she listened to the words of the old housekeeper when Mrs. Culpepper visited her that night. I dread that I may suggest, even in the least de-

gree, an idea that she was unwomanly, forward, or bold, when I say that the thought of seeing Smeaton on the following morning in private, imparted no other emotion than joy ; yet so it was. Emmeline's character, however, was eminently feminine, in the finest, noblest signification of that word. The idea of a clandestine interview with her betrothed made her whole heart thrill ; it agitated, almost overpowered her ; but it was all with joy. Her education had involved none of the conventional restraints of women in her class of society : restrained, tied down, she had been, though in a different way. She knew not, she could not conceive, that anything was wrong, anything that could be even construed into wrong, in thus meeting him she loved. Her spirit sprang to meet his, to tell him all she felt, to pour into his bosom the pent-up thoughts of the last week. She could as much have fancied that a skylark could be blamed for trilling his glad song in air over the nest of his feathered mate, as she could be by the

good and wise for that which she was about to do. The world is full of conventionalities which have ever been accumulating since the creation ; they are the fetters of the fallen. Adam and Eve found them out as soon as they had tasted the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of Good and Evil ; and the green leaves which they twined to cover them, formed the first sophistication. But dear Emmeline was in some sort like Eve before she suffered herself to be beguiled by the serpent. She had not tasted of that fruit. She knew little of evil, and had not a heart to imagine it ; and, as I have said, the idea of meeting her lover, and enjoying one quiet hour of tranquil conversation with him, suggested nothing but thoughts of joy.

Some vague words, indeed, which the old housekeeper dropped, before she left her, in regard to the coming interview and the influence it was likely to have upon all her future fate, produced a certain feeling of timidity, though not great ; and she was

up and dressed before Mrs. Culpepper presented herself on the following morning. Her timidity, however, had by this time increased ; and she besought the old lady to come with her and be present ; but Mrs. Culpepper knew more of love and lover's feelings than Emmeline, and was quite well aware that she would be one too many at their meeting.

"No, my dear child, no," she said. "Young gentlemen, when they speak to young ladies whom they love, do not like to have old women listening. I will wait in the passage, however, and give you notice when it is time to part ; but, as to everything else, you had better be alone."

In her heart perhaps Emmeline agreed with the old housekeeper ; at all events, she submitted readily ; and, with a faltering step and somewhat agitated air, followed to the place of interview. Smeaton was there before her ; and he took care to close the door.

I will not dwell upon what passed be-

tween them. Many important things were proposed, discussed and settled ; much was to be told, explained, and listened to ; yet nothing was settled, and very little discussed. Marvellous how the time ran on in the words of love and the feeling of happiness ! They forgot the future in the present ; and they were just approaching the very object of their meeting, when the old housekeeper quietly opened the door and told them it was time to part. Then came the hurried and whispered engagement to meet again on the following morning, with a pledge to each other to act more wisely and providently, and use their time to better purposes.

Thus they parted ; and Emmeline, agitated and confused with the inebriating taste of early love, returned to her chamber to dream dreams of happiness. Her head had rested on his bosom ; his arms had clasped her to his heart ; his lips had been placed on hers. It

was all for the first time ; and that first time works an eventful change in woman's heart.

They met again upon the following day ; and, though strongly tempted as they had been before, they were wise and remembered that much had to be determined. Neither upon this conversation will I dwell any more than upon that which preceded. The reader can easily imagine what were the feelings of a young, innocent, inexperienced girl, when a proposal was placed before her to quit the dwelling in which she had been brought up—to leave the protection to which she had been accustomed—and to go in silence and in secrecy to a distant land with one whom she loved dearly, but had not long known. She doubted him not ; she trusted him entirely ; she felt sure that he would take no base advantage of her confidence ; she believed him fully when he told her that she should be to him as a sister till she became a bride ; but yet her heart sank and her

limbs trembled ; and it was with difficulty that her lips could be brought to utter the promise.

Smeaton took every pains to reassure and comfort her. Perhaps the first might seem a strange way ; but yet it was a very effectual one. According to a custom which he had seen in other lands, he bound her to himself, and himself to her, by a simple form of betrothal. With her hand in his, he pledged himself to her for ever, and made her repeat the same promise towards him ; then they mutually called upon God to bless them as they kept that vow ; and then he placed a small, jewelled ring upon her finger—an ancient gem of his house—and after leaving it there for a moment, and pressing a kiss upon the hand that bore it, he told her to fasten it round her neck with a ribbon, and keep it always in her bosom.

Still, however, he found her agitated, perhaps I may say alarmed ; but then he whispered a few words in her ear ; and

all irresolution was at an end. Emmeline's bright eyes grew brighter as they fixed upon his face with a look not fuller of surprise than of joy; and, clasping her hands together, she said—

“Then I go safely, rightly. It is a duty. I no longer fear.”

“You shall have the paper to-morrow,” said Smeaton; “but as soon as you have read it, it had better be destroyed. I have kept it concealed where nobody could find it, even when my baggage was searched in London; but now, in justice to you, my beloved, I must show it, that you may feel yourself justified in all that you do.”

Again they were forced to part. Little more remained to be settled; and that they thought would easily be done. The hour, the manner, the means of flight, were to be arranged; but flight was determined; and they parted happily.

When Emmeline was in the solitude of her own chamber, however, and when all she had promised, all she was

about to perform, came upon her mind like a dream—she was moved deeply. Dangers, difficulties, she thought of little; but the strange newness of all that was before her, alarmed and agitated her. The very thought of quitting the wild, lonely scenes round Ale, quitting them perhaps for ever, produced a very melancholy impression on her mind. There was not a rock or hill, a towering cliff, an indentation of the coast—hardly a tree all around—that she did not know as a familiar friend. They had been the companions of her youth and of her infancy: she had held more communings with them than with human beings; she had peopled them with her thoughts; they had linked themselves to her heart by the strong ties of association; they had been as brothers and sisters to her in the solitude of her own meditations; and, in the absence of other objects of affection, she had clung to them as if they had been living things. Love must be very powerful, to break through all such

bonds, and to make the heart yield up, with no other portion of regret than a passing melancholy, all that we have attached ourselves to for many years. Emmeline was going to quit them all, as she thought—to quit them all in a few days; and it was not to be expected that she should do so without some grief: but love had by this time the full mastery, and she did not and would not repent of the promise she had given. Its fulfilment, however, was far more distant than she anticipated; and, before nightfall of that same day, the relation of almost all things round her had been changed.

CHAPTER VII.

SIR JOHN NEWARK was in a peculiarly gay and lively mood when his noble guest descended to breakfast. He ventured upon a jest or two—a thing rare with him—and discoursed fluently upon matters of literature and affairs of state; not very profoundly, indeed, yet speciously and well. After the meal, he asked Smeaton when he would like to ride over to Mount Place; and the young nobleman replied—

“In a day or two.”

Sir John seemed surprised and a little mortified.

“ I understood your Lordship,” he said in a cold tone, “ that you would go to-day, when we were talking of this matter yesterday ; and, judging that it might be as well that Mount Place should be free of any unpleasant guests, I sent intimation to Sir James this morning that such would be the case. True, I should not have meddled. Busy bodies are always doing mischief.”

“ It matters not,” rejoined Smeaton, good-humouredly ; for his heart was opened by its own happiness. “ I can ride over to-day as well as to-morrow ; and, as you have sent, I will do so.”

“ Pray do not put yourself to any inconvenience,” said Sir John Newark, with all his urbanity restored. “ I only feared it might mortify the good old man.”

“ Nay, I will not do that,” answered his guest. “ I will set off immediately.”

“ Perhaps you had better wait an hour

or two," remarked Sir John, "in case our friend should have any preparations to make."

"Oh, no," returned Smeaton. "I will take the morning-tide. The less of ceremony on such occasions the better. Am I to have the pleasure of your company?"

Sir John Newark shook his head with a rueful countenance, saying :

"I shall spend the next two or three hours less agreeably. I have some persons coming to me upon matters of dull business ; but, if they leave me in time, I will join you at Mount Place. And now, my dear Lord, let me revert to a subject which has been mentioned between us before. Doubtless Sir James Mount will speak to you about the sale of Keanton. If so, you will hear what he says and decide accordingly. His offer may meet your views, or it may not. Should you decline in his case, and yet wish to raise some money without parting with your

property, I have forty thousand pounds quite at your service upon mortgage, if you choose to take it. The estate, I believe, is fully equal to such a burden, still leaving it your own."

They were alone on the terrace at this moment ; and, what might have come next, I cannot say ; for their conversation was interrupted by Richard Newark running up and enquiring whether Smeaton was about to ride out, as he was wild for a gallop.

" You cannot go with Colonel Smeaton to-day, Richard," replied his father, gravely. " He is going to Sir James Mount's, where your company may not be agreeable."

The lad gave a shy, sidelong glance at his father, and then, instantly resuming his light, reckless tone, answered :

" I'll ride with him part of the way, then. There can be no harm in that."

Sir John Newark frowned ; but Richard pursued his point, and, catching Smeaton by the arm, exclaimed :

“Come, let us go and see the horses made ready.”

Smeaton followed him to the stable ; and, though he returned for a few minutes to the house to make some change in his dress, he saw his entertainer no more that day.

In less than twenty minutes, he and Richard Newark were on horseback, and, followed by the young nobleman's own servant and another man, were riding away in the direction of Mount Place. They spurred on at a rapid rate ; and every minute or two, Smeaton could see the boy's eyes turned to his face with a sort of inquiring look ; but he took no notice—leaving his young companion to explain himself if he thought fit.

“Don't stay long at Mount Place, Colonel,” said Richard, after they had gone about half a mile. “Mount Place is a rat-trap.”

“I do not understand what you mean,

Dick," replied Smeaton; "but I do not think I am likely to be caught."

"What I mean is plain enough," pursued the lad. "I have heard that in the year ninety-two, a whole party of gentlemen were taken at Mount Place, and then again, later still, some more. The old man himself got off once; but the next time, he was taken with the rest, and was eighteen months in prison. Either the lawyers found out that he was not a man, but a monkey, and did not hang him, or else they could prove nothing against him: but they hanged one or two of the others, or did something with them. So, if I were you, I would not stay long at Mount Place, for fear of being made to chew unlawful bacon."

Smeaton smiled; but at the same time demanded, in a grave tone—

"Have you any particular cause for your warning, Richard?"

"No—no," replied the lad, hesitating a little; "only two messengers went off

from Ale this morning—one to Mount Place, and the other to Exeter. I have known harm happen after messengers went off, especially when they have gone so early.”

Smeaton paused thoughtfully ere he replied.

“I will not stay long,” he said at length; “it is but a visit of ceremony.”

“Then now I will take some other road,” rejoined Richard Newark; “but mind you are home before dinner, or I shall think they have kidnapped you.”

“No fear of that,” said his companion; “but, as your father evidently did not like your going at all, I think we had better, as you say, take separate paths.”

“How goes it with you and Emmeline?” asked Richard, lowering his voice, and giving a gay look towards his companion. “Sad work, noble gentleman! The poor doves in their separate cages have been forced to silence their cooing. Ah, they will be obliged to come to me, in the end,

to help them." And laughing lightly, he turned his horse's head and galloped away.

Smeaton pursued his onward course, directed, from time to time, by the servant of Sir John Newark, who accompanied him; and at the end of little more than an hour, came to a part of the country where trim hedgerows and well-cultivated fields showed the neighbourhood of some gentleman's seat. At length, a long and beautiful avenue of tall elms was seen, with the road between the trees, sloping gently upwards, and terminating at what seemed a spacious lawn, with a handsome house raised upon a high terrace above.

"That is Mount Place, sir," said Sir John Newark's servant; and Smeaton, telling him that he should have no farther occasion for his attendance, rode on with his own man.

His old military habits led him to mark everything around him, in travelling, with greater attention than men usually bestow on small objects; and his eyes were soon

withdrawn from the house and the scaffold-poles with which the two wings were disfigured, to fresh marks of horses' hoofs deeply indented in the somewhat soft road. These traces were very numerous, and it seemed as if a large cavalcade had recently passed up towards the house. Without slackening his speed, the young nobleman looked to the right and left, in order to discover, if possible, whether this cavalcade had been a disciplined body or not; but the marks of the horses' hoofs were so irregular, that the suspicion which had first crossed his mind soon vanished. He easily perceived that some of the beasts had been going at a canter, others at a trot; some keeping the middle of the road, and some running upon the green turf under the trees.

Riding on at a good pace, however, the young nobleman soon approached what he had conceived to be a lawn, which now turned out to be a large grass court, or bowling-green, surrounded by dwarf walls, with the road sweeping round, on either

side, to the terrace above. He could perceive servants in gaudy liveries standing at the principal door of the house; but there was no appearance of horses; and, trotting on, he dismounted and inquired for Sir James.

“He is within, sir, and expects you,” replied the worthy old blue-bottle whom he addressed; and then, turning to Smeaton’s servant, he added, “Take the horses round to the court at the back.”

But Smeaton interfered promptly. “No, no,” he said. “Walk them up and down here upon the terrace. My stay can be but very short.”

Thus saying, he turned and followed the servant into the house, passed through a great hall, and up a fine old oak staircase. As he ascended, he heard many voices above; but, without hesitation, he went on. The moment after, the door of a large room was thrown open; and he found himself in the presence of eight or nine persons besides the master of the house.

Smeaton was greatly annoyed at the unexpected position in which he was placed ; but his urbanity did not forsake him ; and, with good-humoured cordiality, he met the foolish old magistrate who came forward and addressed him somewhat after the following fashion :—

“ Dear me, my noble friend—noble friend—noble friend, I did not expect you so soon—not so soon—not quite so soon ; or I should have been at the door to receive you—receive you—receive you. Let me introduce you to Sir Harry Blake—Sir Harry, Colonel Smeaton—Lord Talboys, Colonel Smeaton.” And so he went on round the whole room, repeating each name three or four times with vast volubility.

Smeaton bowed round ; and then, drawing himself up somewhat stiffly to check any unpleasant communications which he apprehended might be made, commenced a conversation with Sir James Mount upon the weather and the beautiful scenery round his house. He could see looks of surprise

and impatience upon the countenance of several of those present ; but he went on in the same strain, giving little opportunity to his host for a change of topic. At length, however, a square-built, black-faced man, who was present, cut across the conversation, saying—" I beg your pardon for interrupting you, Sir James ; but it is high time that we should consider the more important objects of our meeting. I suppose Colonel Smeaton, or by whatever name we are to know him, will take part in our deliberations."

Sineaton instantly caught at the opportunity afforded him. " Really, I have to apologise," he said, " for intruding at such a moment. I expected to find you, my dear sir, quite alone ; and, had I known that any important business was to be transacted here to-day, I should not have presented myself. I will now immediately withdraw, and trust to have the pleasure of seeing you again before I quit England."

“ But, my dear sir, you do not know—you do not know—you do not know,” cried Sir James. “ Our meeting was quite of a sudden—quite of a sudden—quite of a sudden. The intelligence that General Foster is in arms for the King—for the King—for the King, and the rumour that his Majesty, his Majesty has actually landed—”

“ This is serious news indeed, Sir James,” interrupted Smeaton, still drawing towards the door ; “ but, as I have no information myself upon these matters, and have no authority of any kind, I cannot afford you advice or assistance. My visit was merely one of compliment in return for yours ; and, as I have business at Keanton, I will take my leave.”

With these words, and with a bow to the assembled gentlemen, who seemed a good deal disconcerted, he quitted the room and descended the stairs, followed to his horse's side by Sir James Mount, pouring forth apologies and explanations to which

Smeaton turned a deaf ear. He contented himself, as his only reply, with asking the nearest way to Keanton ; and, having received information from one of the old servants of the house, (Sir James himself being too much confused by all that had occurred, to answer him distinctly), he rode away, somewhat indignant at the situation in which he had been placed. He judged, and judged rightly, that the persons whom he had seen at Mount Place had been gathered together in haste on the first intimation of his coming, with the view of committing him to participation in the rash schemes which were then beginning to develope themselves ; and he clearly saw that, notwithstanding the studious manner in which the old magistrate had called him Colonel Smeaton, his real name and rank had been communicated to every one present.

But other, and even more painful, considerations than those which affected him personally, now pressed upon his attention.

The intelligence that a gallant, but not very discreet, officer was actually in arms in a desperate cause, and the rumour that an unfortunate prince, who, up to this time, had been suffering solely for the errors of his ancestors, had cast himself madly into the difficulties and dangers of an ill-considered insurrection against the existing government, grieved him deeply. By principle or by prejudice, as the reader may think fit to call it, he was attached to the exiled house of Stuart ; his ancestors had shed their blood and lost their property in its defence ; all the traditions of his family were in favour of its cause ; and perhaps no man might have felt more ready to unsheath the sword for its re-establishment on the throne of England, had not many things occurred within the last five-and-twenty years to weaken in him that hereditary attachment which had brought ruin upon his father. His early life had been spent at the little Court of St. Germain's ; and all that he had witnessed

of the mean intrigues of that court, and the shameless ingratitude of its princes towards some of their best and most faithful servants, together with the licentiousness, the weakness, the frivolity, and the baseness of the principal persons who surrounded them, if not of the princes themselves, had produced a feeling of disgust which, although it could not alter his view of the supposed justice of their cause, put an end to everything like zeal in their favour. He felt with Addison's friend, the poet Tickell, in the "Epistle to a Gentleman at Avignon :"

"From James and Rome I feel my heart decline,
And fear, O Brunswick, 'twill be wholly thine ;
Yet still his share thy rival will contest,
And still the double claim divides my breast :
The fate of James with pitying eyes I view,
And wish my homage were not Brunswick's due ;
To James, my *passions* and my *weakness* guide,
But *reason* sways me to the victor's side."

The progress of the human mind, and

the developement of more just notions of government and of the rights of people as well as of princes, had been great during the twenty-five years to which I have alluded. Smeaton had mingled with many classes in many countries, had heard opinions and arguments which were never uttered in the courts of Kings ; and it was impossible for him to feel in the cause of the house of Stuart that same devoted attachment which had led his father to submit to every loss without murmuring, and to bear ill-usage without complaint. Nevertheless, he felt much pain at the thought of all the disastrous results which might accrue from the enterprise which had now commenced ; and his ride onward towards his mother's property was a melancholy one.

We must leave him, however, for a little, to inquire into what followed his somewhat abrupt withdrawal from the house of Sir James Mount. That worthy magistrate—shrugging his shoulders, confused and irri-

tated, but thoroughly convinced that everything he had done or could do was perfectly just, proper, and discreet—returned to his companions above, and found them in a state of great excitement. They all fell upon him at once, declaring that he had altogether misled them.

“Why, this man seems as cold a Whig,” exclaimed one, “as any Hanover rat that ever swam over the sea from Bremen.”

“You represented to me,” said another, “that he came over expressly to ascertain what could be done for the good cause.”

“You invited me this morning to meet and consult with him,” said a third. “I have your note in my pocket at this moment.”

“I doubt whether he is the Earl of Eskdale at all,” said a fourth. “One of that family would not be so lukewarm.”

Here Sir James Mount himself, who had, hitherto, only replied by shrugs and grim-

aces, found himself on more certain ground, and replied boldly,

“Why, I know him, Sir Harry. I have seen him myself at Nancy—at Nancy—at Nancy. There is not a doubt—there is not a doubt—there is not a doubt of who he is. As to his coldness, it may be all discretion—discretion. He came expecting to see and consult with me alone ; and, as to my inviting you here, gentlemen—inviting you here—inviting you here, I did it for the best, and on good advice. Look here, what Sir John Newark says.”

And, drawing a note from his pocket, he read as follows :—

“My worshipful and excellent friend, I write you these few words to tell you that our friend, the Colonel, will be over with you this morning, to speak upon the important business you wot of. He seems perfectly confident of his own safety, and to entertain no objection to meeting any

one—in which, I think, he is rash ; but I would have nobody at my house except discreet people, if I were in your case. Keanton is so near you that, most likely, he will go over there before he fully decides upon what he will do. It is a very valuable property ; and, I should think, ought to produce a good sum if sold.”

“ What he means about Keanton—about Keanton—about Keanton, I cannot divine,” said Sir James.

“ He means it as a blind,” replied one of the others ; “ and, in case his letter were to fall into any other hands, he would vow that it all referred to some matter of ordinary business. Ah ! Sir John Newark, Sir John Newark ! we all know him well. He is not to be trusted.”

“ Stay a minute,” said Lord Talboys. “ The letter may bear a different interpretation. Sir John distinctly says that the Earl will decide upon nothing till he has been to Keanton. Therefore we could not

expect him to open himself to us now. Then again, this matter as to the sale of Keanton, may imply that he wishes first, to see what funds he shall have at command in order to raise men.—You say he is a very celebrated officer, Sir James ?”

“ Very distinguished—very distinguished—very distinguished indeed,” replied the old gentleman.

“ You had better burn the letter, at all events,” said the black-faced man, who was at once the shrewdest and most determined of the party. “ Here, I will strike a light with a pistol-flint.”

“ No, no, no,” said Sir James Mount. “ I may have to show it again—show it again. I expect several other friends ; but he came so soon—he came so soon—he came so soon. Hark ! I hear some of them coming.”

Almost as he spoke, one of the servants entered the room abruptly, with a face in which the nose alone was rosy ; and his

aspect at once alarmed the master of the house.

“What is the matter?—what is the matter?—what is the matter?” he exclaimed.

“Why, your worship, there is a body of foot soldiers half way up the avenue,” replied the man, “and some forty or fifty horses have just ridden up to the back. I am sure I don’t know how they got into the park.”

The confusion and disarray which now prevailed was extraordinary. Poor Sir James Mount was at what is commonly called his wit’s end. Some were for running down and gaining their horses as fast as possible to escape. Others were for attempting to defend the house; and others were actually at the door of the room to sneak away, when the voice of Sir Harry Blake was heard, exclaiming—

“Stay, stay. Every one stay. There is no danger whatever, if we act like brave and prudent men. Should these soldiers

come with any suspicion, we have only to say, that we have met as a body of magistrates and gentlemen to concert means for the preservation of the peace of our district, very sinister rumours having reached us of risings in different parts of the country. No one can deny our right so to meet, or even say that it was not our duty to do so. Bring a light directly, Joseph," he continued, addressing the servant. "Offer no opposition whatever to whomsoever may be at the head of the soldiers. But the light. The first thing is the light."

As he spoke, he drew the note he had received from Sir James Mount from his pocket, and threw it, and another paper into the fire-place. . All who were present followed his example ; and, as the light did not come as soon as they expected, the pile was set on fire by some gunpowder and a pistol-flint ; and every scrap of paper was utterly destroyed. This was not done a moment too soon ; for the

sparks were still wandering about in the tinder, when the high sheriff of the county entered, accompanied by the elderly general officer, in the brown suit, who had played a quiet but important part at the meeting of the magistrates in Exeter.

“ I am sorry to disturb you, gentlemen,” said the high sheriff ; “ but you have met here this morning in somewhat unusual numbers for purposes which require explanation.”

“ Methinks, to a magistrate of your prudence and experience,” said Sir Harry Blake, “ but little explanation would be required, if, as I take it for granted, the sinister rumours which have reached us of armed risings in various parts of the country have come to your ears also. But explanation is very easily given. We met in these perilous circumstances to devise means for preserving the peace of this district, and I think you will not deny, Mr. High Sheriff, that it was our duty to do so.”

“I was not aware, Sir Harry,” replied the gentleman whom he addressed, with a quiet sneer, “that your zeal for the peace of our Lord, the King, was so warm.”

“Warm enough to have left a strong smell of burnt paper behind it,” said the general, looking towards the fire-place. “Pray, what may have been those papers just destroyed?”

“Some incendiary addresses,” replied Sir Harry, readily, with a laugh. “We thought the flame that they have just made there might be less dangerous than any other they could light up in the country.”

“Ha !” said the old general. “Nevertheless, Mr. High Sheriff, I must call upon you to do your duty.”

The high sheriff looked round the group assembled, and then said—

“I think I know every face here present; but there is one gentleman whom we expected to have the pleasure of meeting, and

who is not amongst you. Has the Earl of Eskdale been here ? Or is he expected ?”

“No person of that name has been here,” replied one of the gentlemen, boldly ; and then, with a spice of malice, he added, “One Colonel Smeaton was here a short time ago ; but, not liking our proceedings, he took his departure.”

“Oh, Colonel Henry Smeaton,” said the sheriff. “That will do.” At the same moment, the general took a step towards the door.

“Then I suppose we may as well break up,” said Sir Harry Blake ; but the high sheriff waved his hand, while his military companion quitted the room.

“Pardon me, gentlemen,” he said. “I must request the pleasure of the company of every one of you to Exeter. Informations have been sworn, of which you shall have copies. Here are warrants against five of you, which it will be my painful duty to see executed ; and summonses

have been issued against the rest to come in and surrender, which it will be well for them to obey at once."

As he spoke, the general put his head into the room, saying—

"I must away to Keanton, Mr. High Sheriff, and take a party of horse with me. I have got the information I wanted from the servants, and will overtake you on the road to Exeter."

"Join us at Silvercross, general," said the high sheriff. "I shall much need your counsel and assistance. We have four other friends to inquire after, remember; so you had better come on as soon as you have made sure of your man. Now, gentlemen, are you ready, and is it your intention to come peaceably?"

"Oh, certainly," replied Lord Talboys. "*We* met to preserve the peace. *You* apparently come to disturb it."

"It is all very good—very good—very good," said Sir James Mount, who had now a little recovered himself; "but I do not

know what I have done to deserve this treatment ; and I will have reason for it—reason for it, when I get to Exeter.”

“ You shall have reason for it here, my dear sir,” replied the high sheriff. “ I think this is your handwriting—if not, it is an exceedingly good imitation ; and, in this letter addressed to Sir William Wyndham, you tell him there is every reason to believe that King James is actually landed in Scotland. Now, who King James is, you best know ; but that is a question government is determined to enquire into in conference with yourself ; and therefore I am afraid you must take a journey to London.—Now, gentlemen, I will show you the way ; and I trust that you will follow, without obliging me to send up for you.”

Thus saying, he descended the stairs ; and one after another of the party above, with dejected looks and crushed expectations, walked down after him, passing between two files of soldiers in the hall.

Few words were spoken by any of them ; but Sir Harry Blake whispered to Lord Talboys—

“ I would bet a guinea to a pinchbeck shoe-buckle, that Newark is at the bottom of this.”

CHAPTER VIII.

THROUGH quiet hedgerows and calm and solitary lanes, Smeaton pursued his way towards Keanton. As he advanced, he thought he recognised the objects around him. It might be fancy, or it might, indeed, be memory; but he had often heard the place described; and two well-executed views of the house and neighbouring grounds always hung in his mother's chamber. So that a clear, brawling brook which cut across the road, and a group of

old oaks upon a knoll, seemed quite familiar to him, and showed him that he was approaching Keanton rapidly.

Before going to the family mansion, he thought it better to call at the house of farmer Thompson, and inquire into the state of things in the neighbourhood. He found nobody within, however, but the stout servant-maid, who looked at him apparently with some degree of suspicion, and gave very short answers to his questions. She could not tell where Mr. Thompson was," she said. "She did not know whether Mr. Jennings was at the house or not. Her master might be home soon or he might not, just as it happened. He was very uncertain, 'specially just about harvest-time.

"Well, my good girl," said Smeaton, "there are two things I think you must do for me. Give me a draught of milk, if you have got any, and call somebody who can tell me more."

He spoke with soldier-like frankness ; and the girl laughed, replying :

“Milk you shall have, sir, and welcome ; and I’ll call somebody else ; but, whether they can tell you more or not, I cannot say.”

Leaving him in the passage where he stood, she went away towards the back of the house, discussing with herself in half uttered sentences, the question of whom she should call.

“Not Tom,” she said ; “for he would blurt out everything in a minute, all about the fat man up at the great house, and all. I’ll call Dick Peerly. There is no getting anything out of him—at least *I* never could.”

After getting a bowl of milk at the dairy, she mounted upon a stone step let into the wall of the yard, and screamed at the top of her voice to good Van Noost’s first acquaintance at Keanton, who was working in the field behind.

“Here, Dick, Dick Peerly,” she cried, “come hither. Here is somebody wishes

to speak to thee, man." Having thus vociferated, she carried the bowl to the stranger.

Dick Peerly sauntered up to the house at her bidding, whistling as usual ; but, as soon as he saw the visitor, he put his hand up to his forehead as a salutation, with much greater signs of respect than he had shown to Van Noost.

"Can you tell me, my man, where farmer Thompson is ?" asked Smeaton.

"No, that I cannot, sir," replied the lad. "He may be gone to Ballimoree for aught I know."

"Ballimoree !" echoed Smeaton, gazing at him. "Where is that ?"

"Why, you fool, Dick, cannot you give the gentleman a reasonable answer ?" exclaimed the girl. "It is all his nonsense, sir. There is no such place as Ballimoree."

"I only meant to say, he might be anywhere in the world, sir, for aught I knew," replied the young man, eyeing Smeaton

very attentively. "But here he comes up the road, if you want to see him."

Smeaton drank the milk ; and then, leaving his horse with the servant, walked on to meet the good farmer, while the maid and the peasant-lad looked after him down the road. The meeting was too far off for them to hear any of the words spoken ; but, in an instant, they saw the farmer uncover his head, and stand with his hat in his hand till Smeaton made him a sign to put it on again. Then, without returning to the farm-house, they walked away towards the mansion, making a sign to the servant to follow with the horses.

They reached the great iron gates and went in ; the servant followed and disappeared also ; and the girl was turning to her work again, when suddenly a clattering sound was heard upon the road near, and a small party of horse came down at full speed.

The moment the lad Dick Peerly beheld them, he darted away to meet them, and laying his hand on the neck of the charger mounted by an elderly man in a plain brown suit, he uttered the word, "Ballimoree."

"Ay, Ballimoree, to be sure," replied the general, ordering his troop to halt. "Are you Dick Peerly?"

The spy, for such he was, nodded his head, saying in a low tone—"He's up there at the house, or I am quite out. He came not ten minutes ago. But go carefully to work, sir; for there are so many ins-and-outs in that old place, that he'll get off if you make much noise."

"Come with me, and guide us," said the general. "We will use all caution."

The whole party then rode quietly up the road towards the mansion; but their proceedings had not passed without notice. The servant-girl, startled and surprised by the suddenness of the lad's spring forward to meet the soldiers, ran into the front room of the farm-house, and watched them from

the window. Whatever shape her suspicions might take, she resolved at once that her master should not be without help in need; and, casting her apron over her head, she ran out by the back way, from cottage to cottage, and from field to field, saying a few words to every man and boy she met. The effect of what she told was instantaneous. All her hearers seemed enraged and surprised. One got a thick stick, another a flail, another a scythe. One or two ran into the cottages and brought forth old guns used for frightening the birds from the corn; and some eighteen or nineteen men, together with a number of women and boys, were soon directing their steps towards Farmer Thompson's house, all muttering threats against some one who was probably no other than treacherous Master Dick Peerly.

In the meantime, Smeaton and the farmer had, as we have seen, quietly pursued their way to the mansion, and had opened the great door which was merely

latched. A large old stone hall then presented itself ; but it was vacant, as were also the rooms to the right and left. Voices, talking and laughing, however, were heard from a distance ; and as the surest means of discovering where Master Jennings, the steward, was, Farmer Thompson led his young lord towards the great kitchen, in which a stout, rosy dame was bustling and scolding the maids. From her they learned that her husband Jennings was out in the little court with “ the fat strange man, helping him in his tom-fooleries,” as she chose to express it.

“ They have spoiled my best ladle amongst them,” she said, “ that is all I know ; and I think Jennings is as great a fool as the other, for he has let the two men be called off their work in the garden for his nonsensical lead melting. But if my lord chooses all this to go on, there is no help for it, I suppose.”

Smeaton smiled ; and Farmer Thompson led the way towards the back court through

empty passages and a number of open doors. In the little stone-paved enclosure which they soon reached, an animated scene presented itself. Slung upon a tripod, such as that much in use amongst our friends of the gipsy race, was an immense large pot or caldron with a furious fire of brushwood beneath it. Two men in the garb of labourers were supplying fresh fagots to the flame; and the steward Jennings, a man upwards of sixty years of age, was standing by looking on, while Van Noost himself, the presiding demon of the flame, bustled about, stripped to the waist and thickly begrimed with smoke and dirt.

For an instant he did not seem to perceive the approach of the young nobleman and his companion, so busily was he engaged in looking into the great pot, and moving some substance in it with a long ladle which he held in his hand. When he saw Smeaton, however, he rolled towards him with a joyous laugh, exclaiming—

“Here I am, my lord—here I am, at my old trade, and in your lordship’s service!”

At the same time, farmer Thompson beckoned up the steward and introduced him to his young master. A few kindly words passed from the lips of Smeaton, and expressions of respect and attachment from those of Jennings; after which Smeaton turned to Van Noost, saying—

“Well, my good friend, what are you about now?”

“Casting balls, my lord—casting balls for pinnacles,” replied Van Noost, turning back to his caldron. “There is not one left in the place. What is a pinnacle without a ball, more than a cannon without a shot?—Halloo! halloo! who are these gentlemen?”

His exclamation immediately led Smeaton to turn in the direction which Van Noost’s eyes had taken; and he beheld, at each of the three doors which led into the court, a small party of dismounted troopers,

every man having his cocked pistol in his hand. At the head of one of these parties was the general officer, in his plain brown suit.

"Halt there!" said the old officer, to the men; and he moved quietly, alone, and unarmed, towards the scene around the caldron.

Without the slightest hesitation or embarrassment, Smeaton advanced a step or two to meet him, knowing that he himself was the person who must now speak and think for the rest.

"May I ask," said he, civilly, "to what we owe the pleasure of your company, sir?"

"To a somewhat unpleasant cause," replied the general, mildly. "One of the persons without, is charged with a warrant for the apprehension of Henry, Earl of Eskdale. I do not know whether I have the honour of addressing that nobleman."

"The same, sir," returned Smeaton. "I shall of course submit, although this is a

very inconvenient proceeding, which I was not led to expect. The Earl of Stair assured me that I should not be molested."

"I know not that he had any power to give such an assurance, my lord," remarked the old officer; "but the warrant runs in the name of the high sheriff of the county, and I have no choice but to see it executed, being directed to give him every aid and assistance. Nevertheless, I doubt not that if you could prove such assurance had been given to you, it might have had great influence; but——"

He paused; and Smeaton instantly rejoined—

"I can easily prove the fact, sir. Amongst my baggage at Ale Manor, I have a letter from his lordship to General C——, which I was to deliver, in case of obstruction."

"My name is General C——, my lord," said the old officer; "and I shall be

most happy to receive his lordship's commands."

"Then, if you will take the trouble of riding with me to Ale," pursued Smeaton, "you shall have the letter immediately, by which you will see that not only is my presence in England well known to, and permitted by, the government, but that my whole baggage and papers have passed under examination in London."

"This is somewhat strange," observed the old officer; "for no knowledge of such facts have reached this county. Nevertheless, I fear, my lord, it is my duty to take you to Exeter; and indeed I have not time to turn so far out of the way as Ale."

"I think you are a little hard," said Smeaton. "May I inquire whether I am apprehended on suspicion merely, or upon some positive charge, which might justify my being carried away—to jail as I suppose, not only—without the baggage necessary

for my personal convenience, but without the very means of showing that such a suspicion can have no just foundation?"

"I do not wish to deal harshly, my lord," rejoined the other, taking out his watch; "and perhaps, as it is not yet two o'clock, I may make such arrangements as may tend to your convenience. I must now put you in the hands of the officer who bears the warrant; but I shall tell him, at the same time, that if he feels it consistent with his duty to take you round by Ale, for the purpose of obtaining what baggage and papers you want, I have no objection. Your lordship demanded whether you are apprehended on suspicion. Such indeed is the case; but I am much afraid that what we have seen here this day must form the basis of a very grave charge."

As he spoke, he pointed with his hand towards the great caldron, by the side of which Van Noost was standing, an image of fat despair, and shaking in every limb, notwithstanding the heat.

Smeaton could not help laughing.

“Pray, General,” he said, “what do you think they are about?”

“Casting bullets beyond a doubt,” replied the old officer. “We overheard the admission from that man’s own lips as he came up. He talked of cannon indeed; but we see none about the place. However, the object is perfectly clear; and he must accompany your Lordship to Exeter.”

Smeaton laughed somewhat bitterly.

“Prepossession induces strange mistakes,” he said. “If you will ask the man what he was really about, he will tell you; and, if you please, I will tell you beforehand, so that you can compare the two accounts.”

“I am not here to take examinations, my Lord,” returned the old officer. “Any explanations you have to give had better be reserved for another place. I heard some of the words I have alluded to; and the men heard others. That is all we

have to testify to ; and I presume there is no doubt of this being a caldron full of lead. At all events I will see."

Thus saying he walked up to the fire, and looked into the large pot, adding as he did so :

" The matter is very plain. This is boiling lead for casting bullets."

" For casting no such thing," exclaimed Van Noost, in a voice affected both by fear and indignation. " I have not got'a bullet-mould in the world, and never cast a bullet in my life. The lead was melted to cast balls for the pinnacles and corners of the roof."

" A very good excuse," said the old officer, drily, staring at the grotesque figure of the statuary. " Pray, sir, what may be your name ?"

Van Noost hesitated to reply ; and the old general added, with a smile :

" It does not much matter ; for, under whatever name you go, we must have you in Exeter, my good friend."

“ Well, then, my name is Van Noost,” said the statuary, with the boldness of despair. Then fancying he saw a better chance of obtaining credence for his story if he stated his profession, he added, “ Van Noost, the statuary and founder of leaden figures, Decorator of Gardens, &c., &c. I have had the honor of doing many a piece of work for good Queen Anne ; and I declare, so help me Heaven, I was doing nothing at all but going to cast round balls for the angles, where you may see the old ones have fallen off.”

“ I am afraid the balls might have been used for other purposes, good Master Van Noost,” said General C—— ; “ but I am very happy to have met with you ; for you are wanted in London on a charge of holding seditious correspondence with his Majesty’s enemies.”

“ Upon my word, sir,” interrupted Jennings, now speaking for the first time, “ the poor man was doing nothing but what he says. You do not recollect me, I dare

say ; but my name is Jennings ; and I believe I am well known to everybody as a peaceful and quiet man who never meddles with politics or anything that does not concern him. At all events, my Lord knew nothing of the casting ; for he has not arrived two minutes ; and this is the first time he has been here since he was a boy.”

“ You had better follow your rule of not meddling, on this occasion also,” rejoined General C——. “ You may say things that I would rather not hear. I am not at all disposed to act harshly, or put any one to the pain of imprisonment unnecessarily, although I am not sure that, in the strict line of duty, I should not send every one here to Exeter jail. However, I shall content myself with this noble Lord and this worthy statuary, against whom charges exist, independent altogether of the present suspicious transaction. That also will have to be investigated ; and then, Master Jennings, if you have any evidence to give,

it will be received.—Now, Corporal Miles, call in Captain Smallpiece.”

Having said this, he crossed his arms upon his chest, and looked gravely down upon the ground, till the person he sent for appeared ; and then, pointing to Smeaton and the sculptor, he said,

“ That gentleman’s name is the Earl of Eskdale ; and the other is Master Van Noost. I give them both into your custody, Captain Smallpiece ; and you will have the goodness to conduct them to Exeter.”

“ I suppose I am to tie their arms ?” said the insolent soldier, interrupting him.

“ You are to show them no indignity whatever, sir,” replied the general, “ but to remember that, for your proper treatment of them, as well as for their safe custody, you will be held responsible. His lordship has expressed a wish to have part of his baggage, and some papers necessary to his defence, from Ale Manor ; and I

have no objection to your riding round that way and permitting him to obtain what he wants. But you will, on no account, lose sight of him ; and I think it will be better for you to seal up the rest of his lordship's baggage at Ale Manor, and to mark, with your own hand, all the papers which he may think fit to bring away. These are precautions, my lord, which I am sorry to be obliged to take ; but my duty requires them."

The young nobleman bowed stiffly ; and Captain Smallpiece demanded in a less bullying tone than ordinery—

"Are you not going with us, then, General ?"

"No," replied the old officer. "I must ride after the high-sheriff. Good morning, my Lord. I trust that you will be able to clear yourself of all charges ; and, in the meantime, I shall be happy to receive my Lord of Stair's letter—for which, I will give you an acknowledgement—and produce it upon the proper occasion."

Thus saying, he walked slowly out of the court, leaving Smeaton and Van Noost to the tender mercies of Captain Smallpiece, who beckoned up his troopers to assist in the removal of the prisoners.

At that period of English history, and for the greater part of that century, the constitution of the armies of England was very different from any thing we have seen in our own time. Abuses, hardly credible to us, so rapid and complete have been the reforms of late years, existed in every branch of the service. When we hear of mere boys being made colonels and general officers, and receiving the pay and appointments due to active service, or when we read of *valet-de-chambres*, bullies, and more degraded persons still, receiving commissions in the army by the influence of debauched and unscrupulous patrons, we are inclined to think that the tale is a romance ; but such, alas ! is not the fact. These things really did take place ; and the mess-table of an English regiment presented

a strange mixture, for which we have no parallel at present.

Now Captain Smallpiece was neither of the best nor of the worst of the classes which composed the British army. He was the son of a small hosier at Taunton ; and, having being found exceedingly difficult to manage, or to instruct, given to swaggering, swearing, and drinking, his father took a quieter brother to his bosom and his shop, and contented himself with obtaining, for his eldest son, a commission in the army, through the interest of a nobleman who owed him money, and did not choose to pay it.

Placed under a very strict disciplinarian upon first entering the service, Captain Smallpiece decidedly improved. He lost some of his bad habits, or, at all events, he learned to control them ; acquired a certain military tone and manner ; and, as he was sharp and daring, though somewhat negligent, he gained the reputation of a smart officer. He had been in battle, too—had

not run away, and had received a wound in the service, so that he easily contrived to get from an infantry into a cavalry regiment. Nevertheless, the old proverb in regard to the difficulty of making a silk purse out of a sow's ear, was often brought to the mind of his military companions ; and to those over whom he had dominion, he certainly did not appear in the most favorable light. At the same time, he had certain notions with regard to the perquisites and privileges of his station, which savoured much more of the mercenary sworder of a former day, or of the thief-taker or jailer of his own times, than of the modern soldier. He had no idea of sparing any one the least pain, or yielding to any one the least convenience, without being paid for it ; and he had a happy art of making his requirements known without demanding money in formal terms, which might have subjected him to punishment.

Strange as it may seem, by no one

would his hints have been more easily understandable than by Smeaton ; for he had served too long in foreign armies not to have seen the same conduct even in greater excess. He appeared to enter into the character of the man at once ; and, rapidly considering his own peculiar position, made up his mind to pay largely for any concession which might enable him to see Emmeline even for a moment before he was removed to Exeter, or perhaps to London.

“I presume,” he said, as soon as the general was gone, “you will permit me to ride my own horse, which is waiting.”

“If you pay for his keep and dressing, my lord,” replied the captain.

“Oh, yes, I understand all that,” said the young nobleman. “I have served many years myself, my good friend, and understand what is right and proper on these occasions. What is done for my own convenience must, of course, be done at my own expense.”

Captain Smallpiece grinned graciously ; for he at once perceived that he should be spared any embarrassing explanations. However, he thought it best to begin his exactions vigorously at once for fear of any after resistance ; and so, rubbing his head, he observed, in a sort of meditative tone—

“As to taking this round about by Ale, ’pon my life, I do not know what to do. Zounds, my lord, it makes nine miles difference ; and that, upon a long march, is something. I don’t believe we shall ever be able to reach Exeter to-night if we do ; and then I shall have to feed the men and horses ; and I doubt whether the magistrates will allow the money. The general did not *order* me to do it. He only said I *might*.”

“Which was as good as an order,” added the Earl, who had heard him quietly to an end. “As to your expenses being allowed, whether the magistrates do that or not, I shall defray them. We can settle that, captain, at the first place where we

stop for any time ; but, if we do not go to Ale Manor House, I shall have no means of defraying anything, as, not expecting this adventure, I have not a guinea in my purse."

"Well, we must go, I suppose," grumbled the worthy officer. "That is to say, if you think what General C—— said was intended for an order."

"Oh, that it was, that it was," cried Van Noost, who was struggling, all begrimed as he was, into his smart coat and waistcoat.

"I should take it as such, were I in your place," observed Smeaton ; "and I am a soldier, you must recollect, as well as yourself."

"Very well then, come along, my lord," rejoined Captain Smallpiece, assigning two of his soldiers to guard each of the prisoners.—"Stand back, fellows ! No private talk with people in custody !"

This was addressed to Jennings and Farmer Thompson, who were pressing

forward to take leave of their lord. The first bore it with much patience ; and the second drew back, and made no farther attempt ; but he had a hot and angry brow, and muttered something to himself with regard to basting Captain Smallpiece heartily, before he had done with him.

“Halloo, what is all this ?” cried Captain Smallpiece, when they entered the court before the house, and saw through the iron gates a great number of peasantry, armed and unarmed, and bearing a very threatening aspect. “Cock your pistols, my men, and mount your horses.”

“Stay, stay a minute, my good friend,” said the young nobleman, not liking the appearance of things at all. “Thompson, Jennings, go and speak with those men, and get them away. Let there be no violence, I beg. It may do me harm, but no good ; and I am not in the slightest danger.”

“I won’t have the King’s troops insulted,” exclaimed Captain Smallpiece, in a loud tone.

“I trust there is not the least chance of it,” said the young nobleman. “Go forward, Thompson, and take them away into the hamlet.”

The good farmer obeyed, but evidently unwillingly ; and as he approached the iron gate to open it, the lad, Dick Peerly, who was within the court with the soldiers, sprang forward, and caught hold of his sleeve, saying something to him which was not heard where Smeaton stood.

But the good farmer pushed him away violently, exclaiming—

“Get thee back, hound ! Thou shalt have what thou deservest, if I catch thee in the place in five minutes. I have got other work to do just now.”

Going to the gates, he was seen speaking to the people, for a moment or two, evidently having some difficulty to persuade them.

At length, however, he walked down the road, with the little crowd following him, though some lingered a while longer, and

many turned to look at the departure of the soldiers, when they had got about a hundred and fifty yards from the gates. Smeaton's horse was then brought forward by his own servant ; and, as he mounted, the man asked—

“ Shall I come with you, sir ? ”

“ Do as you like,” replied Smeaton. “ I shall not be long in captivity. Perhaps you had better ride with us to Ale Manor, at all events.”

“ Ah, you impudent varlet ! ” cried Captain Smallpiece. “ You are the rascal who made such fools of us at Ale.”

“ Heaven help me, noble sir ! ” replied the man. “ I made no fool of you. That would have been trouble thrown away.” At the same moment, he loosed his lord's stirrup, and jumped out of the reach of the captain's arm.

After some questions, and some trouble, good Van Noost, was mounted upon his fat pony, with a very rueful face ; and, near the head of the troop, with a soldier

on either side, he and the young nobleman rode out of the gates. Smeaton's servant, Thomas Higham, followed at the end of the file, a little indeed in the rear ; and, before he left the village, he rode quickly down to the spot where Farmer Thompson was speaking to some people, said a few words to him, and then cantered off after his master.

CHAPTER IX.

THE life of man, like the life of society, goes in epochs. There are periods at which fair fortune, or ill fortune seems to begin or end ; and a long succession of bright or dark days follows, during which no folly seems capable of clouding the sunshine—no precaution sufficient to avert the storm.

The Earl of Eskdale was that day destined to disappointment when, after a long and tiresome ride, fatiguing from

the slowness at which the troop moved, he reached Ale Manor, and was admitted, strictly guarded, to the house and to his own rooms. He found that Sir John Newark had gone out about an hour before, and had taken Emmeline and Richard with him. There was no resource but to procure what letters, money, and apparel he required, and to accompany Captain Smallpiece on the road towards Exeter. The fine, wild scenery round Ale looked more beautiful than ever, though the day was not so promising as many which had preceded it. The sky indeed was generally blue, and the air warmer than it had been in the month of July ; but ever and anon came heavy masses of cloud, floating distinct, low, and heavy, and looking like the flying island of Laputa to the eyes of Gulliver. From time to time, too, they had let fall, in passing, a few large drops of rain ; and, amongst the mistiness which hung about the south-west, might

be seen strange forms of hardening vapours of a light reddish hue where they caught the rays of the sun.

When Smeaton descended from the room he had inhabited, in order to remount, he found several of the servants in the hall, with old Mrs. Culpepper at their head. She seemed to witness his captivity with a stoical sort of apathy, which he knew to be far from her nature, and took no more notice of him than by dropping a formal curtsey as he passed. He easily understood her motives, and merely said—

“Be so good as to inform Sir John Newark, madam, that I trust to be back here in a few days. Do not let him make himself at all uneasy on my account ; for, as he well knows, I have given no offence to the existing government, and can therefore be in no danger.”

“I will tell him, sir,” replied Mrs. Culpepper ; and the young nobleman mounted and rode on.

The pace at which Captain Smallpiece thought fit to proceed was, as I have hinted, the very slowest possible; and it was evident to Smeaton that he did not intend to reach Exeter that night; but the clouds, which began to gather thick and lurid in the sky some way before they reached the hamlet and church of Aleton, induced him to quicken his movements a little. Rain was beginning to fall when they passed the small public-house; and the sergeant of the troop, who seemed on very familiar terms with his commanding officer, ventured to hint that it might be as well to stop there and refresh the men and horses.

“No, no, Jack,” replied the captain. “We must get on a little farther till we come to Norton-Newchurch. There, we’ll halt at old Mother Gandy’s. She brews the best, and I owe her a turn.”

Perhaps he regretted, before long, that he had determined to proceed; for the menacing aspect of the clouds was soon

changed into active operations. Thunder, lightning, and torrents of rain, pursued the party for the next three miles, which was the distance between Aleton and Newchurch, and not a man but was drenched to the skin, when the party dismounted at the door of the inn—if inn it could be properly called, being nothing more than a long, rambling public-house, of two low stories, looking like half-a-dozen cottages put together.

As soon as he was under shelter, Captain Smallpiece drew forth his watch, and found that he had contrived to make it six o'clock before his arrival. This was just what he intended, apparently ; for he abruptly declared that, with wearied men and horses, it would be impossible to reach Exeter that night. He then made arrangements for the accommodation of his soldiers, and demanded a private room for himself and his prisoners, at the door of which he planted the trooper whom he most disliked in the party, to perform, in

his dripping clothes, the wearisome office of sentry.

“Now, my Lord,” he said, as soon as the door was shut, “what will you please to treat the men with? Gadzooks! I shall be glad enough to put something warm into my own stomach; and I dare say, they will too, poor devils!”

Smeaton smiled, and replied—

“If you will call the landlady—mother Gandy, as you name her—I will order refreshment for ourselves. As to the men, you had better take these ten guineas to provide them with what you judge necessary.”

The Captain had no scruple; and, when the landlady appeared, the young nobleman gave an ample order for good cheer for himself and his companions; and the worthy officer ordered refreshments for the men to the value of about a fourth part of what he had received.

“Set a barrel of good strong ale a-broach

for them, madam, on my account," said the young Earl; and, with a low curtesy, the good woman withdrew, while Smallpiece exclaimed, with a coarse laugh,

"D——n it, you must not make them drunk, my Lord."

"I have no such intention, sir," replied Smeaton; "and if I had, they would get sober before morning,"

In one respect, the young nobleman and Van Noost were better off than their captors; for they had dry clothes at hand, of which they did not neglect to avail themselves; and good Van Noost seemed to acquire fresh courage with a dry jerkin. A good supper—for in those old times, seven o'clock might be considered as a supper hour—completely restored him to confidence; and Captain Smallpiece, gazing on his washed and rubicund face, and clean apparel, and listening to his flat jokes, and his discourses regarding all his leaden mythology on the Reading road,

could hardly believe that he was the same man he had first seen at Keanton, and pronounced him a jolly good fellow. This impression was very greatly increased when Van Noost undertook to manufacture the punch for the whole party, and his brewing turned out to be the most delicious that had ever been tasted.

Fertile in resources, whenever his first panics had subsided, the sculptor's brain was now entirely occupied with the thought of finding means for the escape of himself and his companion, never dreaming that Smeaton had no desire to escape at all. The first and simplest scheme that suggested itself to his mind was to make Captain Smallpiece drunk ; and the worthy officer's propensity towards the bottle, was written on his countenance in large letters. But insuperable obstacles intervened : the punch being made in the room, there was no deceiving Smallpiece as to the proportions of the rum and the water. Moreover, the worthy captain

was upon his guard against himself ; and, though he drank fast and hard at first, he soon began to hold his hand. One bowl was emptied without doing harm to any one. Van Noost began to brew another, but Smeaton told him he should drink no more ; and Captain Smallpiece said,

“ Nor I either.”

The sculptor went on, however, and took a ladle-full, saying,

“ *I am not afraid. My stomach is stout and my brain too.*”

“ Well, another glass,” said the captain, in a resigned tone ; and to that other glass, he added a second, a third, and a fourth, sometimes making Van Noost drink with him, sometimes stretching forth his hand to the bowl and helping himself almost unconsciously. But his head was a well-seasoned cask, upon which the fresh liquor made little impression. He merely grew somewhat more loud and talkative, more domineering in his manner and his tone.

Then Van Noost thought that, if he

could but get Smeaton's servant into the room and the sentry away from the door, they could soon overpower the worthy captain himself and make their escape from the window which was on the ground floor ; but the young nobleman would not take any hint. He did not want his servant and would not send for him ; and Captain Smallpiece continued, with his long legs under the table, and his eyes turned towards the door, so as to see the sentry every time it opened. Some of Van Noost's manœuvres, too, seemed to excite his suspicion ; for when, on one occasion, the statuary rose and went to the window, he exclaimed—

“ Come, come, sit down, fat gentleman. What are you marauding about for ? ”

“ I only wanted to see if it rained still,” replied Van Noost ; “ but it is quite a fine night, and the moon is coming out between the white streaks.”

Captain Smallpiece d—d the moon, and asked what he had to do with her.

“Perhaps she might light you to Exeter, if you like to ride,” said the young nobleman, gravely. “Is such your intention or not, Captain Snrallpiece? for I think I hear your men bringing out the horses.”

“Not they!” cried the captain, without budging from his seat; “and if they do, they must take them in again. I gave my orders; if they choose to mistake, it is their own fault.”

Van Noost kept quite silent; for the sounds which had reached Smeaton’s ear reached his also; and there certainly was a noise as of many feet before the house. Then came a loud burst of talking and laughing; and a merry voice without, tuned up some ribald song. A lull succeeded; then more loud talking; then, apparently, angry words; and at last a loud and confused din, as if twenty or thirty people were all shouting at once.

“Some of those blackguards of mine have got drunk, and are quarrelling with the bumpkins,” said Captain Smallpiece, in a growlinton. “Well, they must fight it out;

but they had better make haste, or *I'll* be in amongst them."

The din increased instead of diminishing ; and, at the same moment, a voice was heard speaking to the sentry at the door.

"What is the matter ?" shouted Captain Smallpiece, without rising. But, almost as he spoke, there was the report of a pistol ; the door burst open ; the sentry was thrown headlong into the room ; and a number of men rushed in, with white shirts drawn over their garments, and their faces blackened.

Starting on his feet with a tremendous oath, Captain Smallpiece seized Van Noost by the collar, exclaiming—

"This is thy doing ; and I will blow thy brains out." At the same time, he pressed a large horse-pistol to the unhappy man's head ; and the lock clicked as he cocked the weapon. The fury in his face, and the fierceness of his gesture, showed that he was prepared to execute his threat ; and another moment would have sent the poor

sculptor to an immortality somewhat different from that which his leaden figures were likely to procure for him. But a tremendous blow from Smeaton's strong arm saved Van Noost's life and laid the doughty captain grovelling on the ground. As he fell, the pistol went off, and the bullet struck the wall, while he shouted furiously—"Ah, my lord, you shall hang for this!"

What followed, it is impossible to describe accurately; for the men from without, rushing in and throwing themselves both upon the officer and the sentry, contrived in the short struggle which ensued to bind them, to overturn the table, break the punch-bowl and glasses, and extinguish the lights. In the midst of this scene, Smeaton found his hand grasped by some one; and a voice said—"Come with me, come with me; and you are safe."

He hesitated for an instant, while a multitude of considerations passed through his mind, rendering it difficult to decide

what to do. Another man, however, caught him likewise by the arm ; and they hurried him on between them towards the door.

“ This way, this way, my Lord,” said a voice, which he thought he knew.

All was darkness in the passage ; and those who guided him did not take him through the room in which the soldiers had been regaling. The door of the kitchen was open, however ; and the interior, as he passed, presented a somewhat strange sight. Two or three of the troopers were lying on the floor, apparently dead-drunk ; others were sitting upon benches or stools, with their arms tied tightly behind them ; some were in a sleepy state of drunkenness, which rendered them nearly unconscious of what had happened ; others were roaring forth a bacchanalian song in spite of their bondage, or sitting, gloomy and stern, meditating over the way in which they had suffered themselves to be surprised.

Amongst the latter was the sergeant,

Miles, who caught a glimpse of Smeaton, and exclaimed :

“ Ah, my Lord, I know you.”

Smeaton paused, as if to reply ; but the two men hurried him forward forcibly ; and the next moment he was standing upon the road before the inn.

“ Here is your horse, sir,” said the voice of his servant. “ All the things are in the saddle-bag behind. Let us be off as fast as possible. Then the good folks will separate. Quick, my Lord ! I will show you the way.”

Smeaton mounted in silence amongst a number of horses, and with eight or ten men flitting round, but apparently taking not the least notice of him. They suffered him to ride away after his servant, without even a word in answer to a question he addressed to one of them. Everything was conducted in profound silence ; and, in a few minutes, the young nobleman was over the brow of the hill,

and out of sight of the house. The servant rode on before, leaving his master to follow, and soon left the high Exeter road on which the inn was situated, for the downs which extended nearly to Mount Place on the one side, and to Ale Manor on the other.

It may be necessary, before I proceed, to take some brief notice of the various thoughts which had crossed Smeaton's mind during the last few minutes, as his conduct was greatly affected thereby. It must be recollected, that in the whole transaction he was taken entirely by surprise. He was not, indeed, often found unprepared for any event; but all which had occurred had passed so rapidly, that impulse might well act in the place of reason. Though not without a thorough conviction that, if he did not interfere, another moment would terminate poor Van Noost's life, it was upon impulse that he knocked down Captain Smallpiece; and he much regretted the necessity of so doing to save the poor

statuary. The consequences of that act presented themselves to his mind the moment after. He saw that it compromised him in a very serious manner; and that a little skilful torturing of evidence by an experienced lawyer, would connect the fact of his taking part in the active struggle for his liberation, with his having ordered the ale with which the soldiers besotted themselves, and that again with the well-organised plan for his rescue, which he doubted not had been executed by his own tenantry. To all this, moreover, would be joined the lead-melting at Keanton, and the words which Van Noost had spoken, and which General C—— and the soldiers had only partly heard.

The whole of the above incidents would indeed form a chain of evidence tending to the one conclusion, that, notwithstanding his promise to Lord Stair, he had taken active measures to promote the insurrection against the government. He knew well, too, that persons made prisoners in the first outbreak of a

rebellion, are sure to receive little mercy, and sometimes little justice. Party violence demands victims; and examples must be made to deter the wavering by fear; so that both passion and policy combine for their destruction. If he neglected the means of escape, there was no prospect before him but long imprisonment, or death on a scaffold.

Then came another consideration; and I must leave it to the reader to settle, as he may be old or young, phlegmatic or ardent, how much this contributed to his decision. He thought of Emmeline, of how these events might effect *her*; nay more, hopes and expectations flashed through his mind of being able, were he finally to succeed in escaping, to execute the scheme of carrying her away to another land, and uniting her fate to his. At the same time, he calculated, with the confidence of youth, upon easily clearing himself of all criminal share in the transactions which

had occurred, if time were but allowed for him to prove the facts, and for men's minds to become composed and tranquillised.

Such were the motives on which he acted. I do not mean to say they were altogether just ; for I am not drawing a perfect character. They seemed sufficient to him at the time, however ; and his next thought was, how best to take advantage of the circumstances in which he was placed. Meditating in silence, he suffered his servant to ride on for about a mile ; but then the latter dropped back, touching his hat, and saying—

“ That way leads to Aleton Church and Ale, my lord, and that to Keanton. Though I thought you would like to go to Ale, I took a round to avoid the people ; but your lordship can do as you like. You are about half way between the two places, somewhat nearer to Keanton perhaps ; but I think Ale will be the safest.”

“ Why do you think so ?” demanded

Smeaton. "And what made you believe I should prefer going to Ale?"

"Why, my lord," replied the man, in his easy, *nonchalant* way, "at Ale you can have a boat always ready to carry you off to the coast of France for half-a-dozen guineas ; and the valley is so narrow, that you can get timely notice if people come down to take you. Then, as to your second question, I have always remarked that gentlemen about your age like better to live in houses where there are pretty young ladies, than in houses where there are nothing but ugly old women. Moths will fly in the candle, my lord ; and young gentlemen are very courageous."

Smeaton smiled ; and the man was falling back as if to let him lead the way, when his master stopped him, saying—

"Here, ride on beside me, Higham, and tell me how all this business has happened?"

"On my life, I don't know, my lord," replied the man. "I had no hand in it

but just getting out your horse and mine, and throwing the saddle-bags across them. All I did was, when they were carrying you out of Keanton, to ride down and tell the stout farmer, who was so busy, that he had better keep the people quiet for the time ; but that, if he set people to look out for us from the top of the hills, he might find means of helping you out of the scrape before you got to Exeter."

"I am grieved at this," said Smeaton, somewhat sternly. "You should not have done so without orders. These poor people have now seriously compromised themselves with the government for an object which I did not at all desire ; and I myself am thereby placed in very unpleasant circumstances. Do you think any of them were recognised by the soldiers?"

"Oh dear, no," replied the man. "I'll tell you how it all happened, my lord. When I heard you had ordered the men a

whole barrel of humming ale, I naturally thought you intended to make them drunk. There were ten soldiers besides the sentry. A barrel holds six-and-thirty gallons. Now that is three gallons and a half a man. I say I could think nothing else, my lord, than that you meant to intoxicate the party ; so I determined to help ; and I treated them all round to a glass of strong waters to begin with. Just about nine o'clock, when the ale had worked, and the strong waters had helped it, and the men were three parts tipsy, in came three country fellows, and called for a pint a-piece. The soldiers began jeering them, and I thought they took it wonderfully quiet, for they only jeered them again, and there was a good deal of laughing and noise. Then came in two more country lads, strong, likely fellows enough ; and they too sat down and talked. A minute or two after, some people on horseback came up to the front of the house, and had the landlady called out ; and three of the soldiers went

out after her, and we could hear a great roaring and noise about the door; and one of the half-tipsy soldiers said, drowsily, 'I dare say they are all smugglers from Ale.' This set one of the countrymen to pick a quarrel with him; and just when they were coming to blows, in rushed a whole set of tall, hearty fellows, with white shirts on, and their faces blackened. They pounced upon the soldiers like so many gosshawks, and, without much of a struggle, tied them, one and all, as tight as if they were going to Tyburn. There was some cracked crockery, indeed, and a stool or two upset; but it was all done very gingerly, for I was not away two minutes, getting out the horses, and it was over before I came back."

"But what made you get out the horses at all?" demanded Smeaton.

"Why, just when the black-faced fellows were coming in, one of the countrymen whispered to me—'Get out your lord's

horse in a minute, and give him to the man who is holding the others at the door.' However, as I was saying, it was all done and over when I got back, the soldiers all tied, and as mute as mice; and one of the men said, in a feigned voice—'Where is your lord? The old woman won't tell.'

"So I led them along up to the sentry, going first myself. He spoke a word or two, and asked what all the noise was about; and when I tried to get hold of him, he fired his pistol, and in the struggle, we both tumbled into the room. Your lordship knows all the rest."

"But were all these men from Keanton, do you think?" his master inquired.

"I don't think it, my lord," replied Higham. "The black-faced fellows, at least, looked much more like Ale men, and they carried their hands inside out, like other marine animals. No, I think they came from Ale; but it is clear enough they were in league with the bumpkins; and I

saw the jolly old farmer outside of the door. That I could swear to."

"Pray mention it to no one, then," said Smeaton ; "for I should be very sorry that he suffered for this rash enterprise."

"The men might be smugglers, after all, my lord," observed the servant, "and might just get a hint when they came up. They are always ready enough to take part in a riot, and to thrash the soldiers. I cannot say how it was, but I tell you all I know."

The information thus received did not induce Smeaton to take a better view of the aspect which the whole circumstances might present when brought into a court of justice. Here was his own servant acting with the mob who had rescued him, attempting to seize and disarm the sentry, and taking a prominent part in the whole affair. Nor did he at all feel sure that, though acting with the best intentions, the man had told him all. It seemed to him improbable that his horse should be so

speedily saddled without some previous intimation of the attempt which was about to be made ; but he thought it better not to question him any farther, and pursued his way in silence towards Aleton Church.

The round they had taken made the distance fully six miles ; but at length the building began to appear upon the side of the hill ; and the Exeter road was perceived descending into the village. The moon, though occasional clouds still flitted over her, was shining with peculiar brightness after the storm ; and by her light he perceived a number of persons both on horseback and on foot taking their way in the same direction as himself. They were going along in so leisurely and unconcerned a manner, that he could hardly fancy them the persons so lately engaged in a daring and hazardous act, although the white garments with which the greater number of them were covered seem to mark them out as the same. He thought it better to avoid

them, however, on all accounts ; and, for that purpose, being higher up on the hill than the church, he so directed his course as to bring the building between himself and them. Before this was accomplished, however, he saw one figure separate from the rest in order to climb the hill ; and, in the short, round form, he recognised, with great satisfaction, a strong resemblance to good Van Noost.

“ Those are some of the men, my lord,” said the servant, “ going back to Ale, you see. I should not wonder if they were smugglers after all.”

Smeaton was very much puzzled. A suspicion had more than once crossed his mind from the words of young Richard Newark, from Sir John’s eagerness to induce him to go that day to Mount Place, and from all which had occurred after, that his worthy host had led him into a trap. Yet who could have sent these people to rescue him except Sir John Newark ?

“ If that is Van Noost, I will know,”

he said to himself ; and, turning again to the servant, he asked—"Is not that very like the stout man who was made prisoner with me ? I hope so ; for I was anxious about him."

"Oh, yes, my lord, that is he," replied the man ; "but there is no fear about him. He is too fat for any harm to happen to him. He'll roll like one of those things called buoys at sea, which are tumbled about in all sorts of ways, but always get right end uppermost."

"I must speak to him, however," said Smeaton. "Here, hold the horse ; and I will go up to him on foot. If I ride after him, he will run."

"And burst himself," added Higham, taking his lord's horse.

Van Noost, in the meantime had climbed the hill, approached the wall of the churchyard, and entered the gates ; but when Smeaton, following with a quick step, approached them, he found them locked, to his great surprise, and Van Noost nowhere

to be seen. Without hesitation, he vaulted over the low wall, and then ventured to call upon his stout friend's name. At first there was no reply ; but upon his exclaiming again, " Van Noost, Van Noost, I want to speak with you," the head and shoulders of the statuary were protruded from behind a buttress ; and he came forward as soon as he saw who it was that called.

" Ah, my dear lord," he said, " I am so glad to see you at liberty, and glad enough to find myself so too. You had better come in here where I am going. I am dead tired, I know ; and I dare say you are too—those cursed saddle-bags have so fatigued me. But we shall be quite safe here ; and I have got half a loaf and a long Oxford sausage with me."

" Where do you intend to hide ?" asked Smeaton. " It will be better for you to come on with me to Ale, whence we can easily get to France."

" I would if I could ; but I cannot," replied the poor man. " I have been so

bumped and thumped and knocked about, that I have not got a leg to stand upon. I am going down into the crypt. There is an end of my old candle left, just to keep away the ghosts ; and I shall be quite safe there."

"But how will you get in ?" asked Smeaton.

Van Noost laughed.

"Ah ! my lord," he said, "I have a fondness for keys you know. I don't keep keys long in my hands without having a model of them. I have got a key for the door of the hiding-place at Ale ; for I thought, whatever your Lordship might say, it might, some day, be of use to you ; and I made one out of an old key at Keanton as soon as I got there."

Smeaton paused in thought for a minute, and then said,

"Give me that key, Van Noost. I should like to have it ; and now, mark what I am about to say. *You* only know how far you have committed yourself with

the government. I am going on to Ale—but not, in all probability, to the Manor House. I shall take up my abode in one of the cottages, if I can find a room. I shall have a boat kept ready to convey me to France in case of need; and, if you think it better for yourself to quit this country, you can come and join me at Ale before daylight to-morrow, resting here in the meanwhile. Some time will probably elapse before we are pursued, for the soldiers will doubtless go on to Exeter in the first place.”

“I’ll not fail, my dear Lord—I’ll not fail,” replied Van Noost; “and yet how can I go to France? It will almost break my heart.—My statues! How can I leave all my statues? And yet, as I may say, the parting has already taken place.—But let me get the key. It is in the saddle-bags by the little door.—Would that I had never meddled with politics!”

As he spoke, he turned back towards the church, accompanied by the young

nobleman, who endeavoured to learn from him without much success, by whose orders the men from Ale had joined the rescue party. They had all been "monstrous silent," Van Noost said; but, when the Earl added some farther questions as to whether they had ever mentioned Sir John Newark's name, the worthy sculptor exclaimed, somewhat vehemently,

"Ay, that they did, my Lord—at least, one of them; and I think you had a great deal better not go near Ale Manor again. From what one of them said, as two talked together, I made out that none of all this bad business would have happened if it had not been for Sir John. They say he has played the same trick to others before you, and always *peaches* and *plays booty*, except in the matter of smuggling."

"Then he did not order the rescue?" asked Smeaton.

"Oh, dear, no," answered Van Noost. "He sent messengers to Exeter in the middle of

last night, with letters to the high-sheriff. So you may judge of the rest."

"Give me the key, my good friend," said Smeaton, through whose brain were passing many rapid considerations regarding his future conduct. "Did you make acquaintance with the parson of this place when you were here?"

"Ay, that I did, and rose high in his favour too," replied the sculptor. "He is a good, fat, jolly priest as ever waddled."

"And thinks of the things of this life, more than of the things of another, perhaps?" asked Smeaton.

"Ay, truly," responded the statuary. "He has more gods than one. A pipe of wine, a purse of guineas, a sucking-pig or a haunch of venison are better than any rubric for him, I wot."

"I must see to this," said Smeaton, in a musing tone; and, although the statuary could not divine whether he alluded to the parson or the pig, the purse or the pipe of

wine, he did not venture to ask any questions, but got the key out of his saddlebags.

Having given it to Smeaton, the latter bade him adieu, and rode away.

CHAPTER X.

I TRUST the reader remembers well the description before given of the little village of fishermen's cottages at Ale, and of the way in which the road, after separating into two, in order to send off a branch to Ale Manor House, proceeded to the entrance of the village, and there dwindled into a narrow path for want of room between the steep banks to reach the sea-side in its original breadth. Smeaton passed the turning of the road towards the

Manor, though evidently with some reluctance ; for he paused an instant before he made up his mind, and then rode on more slowly. Five hundred yards onward brought him to the spot where it was necessary to dismount ; but, before he had completely reached it, two men came out from under the shadow of the bank, and stood directly in his way. The moonlight enabled him to see, however, that they bore the ordinary garb of the fishermen of the place, which I need hardly tell the learned reader, was very different from the fishermen's garb of the present day, and much more marked and picturesque. From these men he apprehended no opposition, even if they were not of the very party which had liberated him ; and he was soon saluted in a civil tone, with the words—

“ Good night, sir. You know you cannot ride down here. We thought it was some of the soldiers.”

Smeaton dismounted and gave his horse to his servant to hold ; and, walking for-

ward a little way with the two men, he explained to them his desire to obtain shelter in the village, and concealment from everybody for a time.

At first there seemed some hesitation in their replies ; and the young nobleman began to fancy that the danger in which he stood, and which might pursue him even there, made them look upon him as an unwelcome guest ; but, when he frankly put the question whether they were afraid to receive him, one of them replied with a laugh—" Lord bless you, no, sir. All the soldiers in Exeter should not take you out from amongst the men of Ale. Unless they brought cannon against us, they could do nothing in this village. We would beat them out with handspikes. It is not that at all. You are right welcome to all that we can do for you ; but they say you are a lord ; and you'll find the best house in the place but a poor hole for such a one as you."

" But, my good friend, I am a soldier,"

replied Smeaton ; “and, when I tell you that I have slept for a month together upon the bare ground, you will easily judge that one of your houses will be quite as good as a palace to me. All I want is shelter and concealment for a little time.”

“That you shall have, sir,” replied the other man, who was somewhat older ; “and, as for concealment, we have got plenty of places where the devil himself would not find you. We sometimes let the custom-house people come and search just for the fun of the thing ; and yet, somehow or another, we contrive to supply the whole country round with Bohea, which never paid toll to King or Queen either.”

“From what I saw to-night,” said Smeaton, “you must have horses amongst you also ; and my two beasts are in some degree an embarrassment to me, unless I can stable them somewhere.”

“You will have to stable them on the downs, sir,” said the younger man ; “for there are no such things as stables in Ale.

But, stay a bit ; I think I can manage it. Farmer Tupper will take them in, I dare say ; he knows how to hold his tongue. As to horses for ourselves, Lord bless you, when we want them, which is not above once a month, we borrow them of our neighbours. Many a good farmer, and gentleman too, finds his horses not fit for much work on the day after the new moon. But then, what does he care ? Every now and then, he finds a pound of tea for his wife, or a bundle of Flemish hosiery for himself, lying at his door or on his window-sill ; and he thinks himself well paid for his horses' night-work. Here, my man—Master Higham—you get down and go with your master. I'll lead the horses across the down to Tupper's farm ; but take off the bags first. Grayling, you had better take the gentleman to your house, for you have more room, and my wife had a babby yesterday morning ; so there is a fine squalling. Bless its little heart !

It has got a pipe like a boatswain's whistle."

Thus saying, he led away the horses, leaving his companion with the young nobleman and his servant, the latter of whom seemed, during his stay at Ale Manor to have become very intimate with all the good fishermen of the village. Before walking on, however, Smeaton judged it better to take immediate precautions for guarding against surprise, and inquired whether a lad could not be hired to watch the road, and give early notice of the approach of any party of soldiers. The old fisherman, Grayling, laughed.

"Lord bless you sir, you don't know us," he said. "Don't you trouble yourself at all about it. No soldier or anything else comes within three miles of us without our knowing it. 'Tother night when they came to the Manor, we were all ready for them if they had come on. You were ready for them too, it seems, though how you got out of their way we

do not know. I had a great mind to give the fellows who came down to the bay looking for you, a drop of salt water to drink for poking their noses into Ale ; and some of our men could scarcely be prevented from doing it ; but it would only have made a noise ; and so it was better let alone. However, you can rest quite as safe here as if you were a hundred miles out at sea. They shan't catch you in Ale, I'll answer for it. So come along, sir."

In a few minutes more, Smeaton and his servant were introduced into the fisherman's cottage, the lower story of which, consisting of a room on either side and a good wide passage between them, was encumbered with a variety of articles belonging to the man's craft or mystery, some of which were not of the most pleasant odour. Salted fish, sails, nets, fishing-lines, spars, oars, boat-hooks, barrels of tar, tallow candles, and a number of things which I cannot describe, were huddled to-

gether in the rooms and in the passage, exhaling a smell, as I have said, more powerful than fragrant, which was considerably assisted by a quantity of smoke issuing forth from the room on the left-hand side. There, at the cheek of the fire, as they termed it, sat the old man's old wife with two or three young dolphins, her grand-children, playing about as merrily as if it had been noon. To her the fisherman introduced his guest, and whispered a word in her ear which instantly made her clamber up a steep little staircase which came down without guard or balustrade, not into the passage, but into the middle of the very room where she had been sitting. The floor above, I may mention, contained four rooms, and was nearly double the size of the floor below, which is only to be accounted for by the fact of the house being built against the steep side of the hill which left not more than eight and twenty feet of flat ground between its base and the river.

The good lady not returning immediately, the fisherman himself went up after her, and found her, like all ladies when visited by an unexpected guest, in a great and setting-to-rights bustle.

“Pooh, pooh!” said the old man; “don’t make such a piece of work, mother. He is quite a plain gentleman, and has been a soldier. He must have the back room too; for there he’ll be snugest.”

“But suppose you want to get the tea out, Jack?” said the old lady. “Why, the bed is just over the hiding-hole.”

“All the better,” replied the man. “He may have to hide there before we have done with him. It is not the first time, I think, mother, that we have hid a man there; and so we must do now, if it is needful. Here, we’ll put the chest for a seat at the foot of the bed. You bring the table out of ’t other room. Then it will all look mighty comfortable. But we must get him some supper before he goes

to bed ; and I'll broach that little keg I brought in last time."

" I hope he'll pay for what he has," said the old lady ; " for we cannot afford to be giving away the things for nothing."

" There, there, don't be a fool," rejoined her husband. " Madam Culpepper will take care we are none the worse for it ; and we all of us owe her more than that comes to."

When they descended the stairs they found Smeaton playing with the children, who were in high glee ; but his servant was no longer with him.

" I have sent my man up to the house," he said. " He can stay there without danger to himself, for to-night at least ; and he may be of service to me."

The old man seem startled and not well pleased.

" You know best, sir," he said, gruffly ; " but—"

" But what, my good friend?" interrogated

Smeaton. "You seem not to like my having done so."

"Why, sir, if he tells Sir John that you are down here, it may be a bad business," replied Grayling. "Mayhap you do not know Sir John as well as we do."

"I think I do," rejoined Smeaton, with a smile; "and, for that reason, I told the man not to say where I am, but merely to let them know I had been rescued and had ridden away. I have left him to tell his own tale; but I can trust him; and, depend upon it, Sir John will know nothing matter."

"Well, well. That is all right," responded the fisherman, his look brightening. "If he sees Mrs. Culpepper first, she'll tell him what to do."

A sudden light broke upon Smeaton's mind. "Pray was it Mrs. Culpepper," he said, "who directed you to come to my rescue?"

The old man laughed.

“ You are quite under a mistake, sir,” he said. “ None of us came to your rescue. We know nothing about it. Ask any man in the place ; and he’ll tell you the same. There has not been one of them a couple of hundred yards from the place to-night.”

A sly smile contradicted his words ; and Smeaton, comprehending the truth, answered laughingly :

“ Nevertheless, Master Grayling, there is a great streak of soot, or some black stuff, all the way down your cheek.”

“ The devil there is !” cried the man, starting up, and walking with the candle to a little looking-glass that hung against the wall. “ Here, mother, give us a tuft of oakum.” And having got what he demanded, he rubbed his weather-beaten cheek hard, and then threw the oakum into the fire.

“ It is a rule here, sir,” he said, “ never to speak of anything that we do beyond the cross-road ; and it is a good rule too ;

so neither you nor any one else will get anything out of us, ask what questions you will. Sir John is a keen hand, and he tried it more 'than once at first ; but he could make nothing of it, for we all know that a man's greatest enemy is his own tongue. You could not make that little child there blab, I'll be bound. But I dare say you know that Mrs. Culpepper has a brother and two nephews living over at Keanton ; good solid men they are, who know how to hold their tongues too ; and that is all I shall say upon the subject. So now, sir, if you like to have a glass of Geneva and some broiled fish, we'll have our supper."

Smeaton explained that he had supped already ; and the old man, lighting a fresh candle, conducted him up the stairs to his bed-room. When they were in it and the door shut, he put down the light and said :

" You won't be very comfortable here, sir ; but you'll be very safe ; and I'll tell you how to manage. But, mind you, I'm

going to put myself a bit in your power ; so you must keep my secret as well as I'll keep yours. That window there looks up the hill ; but nobody can come down that way ; and from it you can see all the way up the path by what they call the blind man's well. Then look here. Underneath that bed, three of the planks lift up altogether. They play upon a pivot ; so you have nothing to do but put your knife under, and lift them as I do now. There, you see, is the top of a ladder, going down into our storehouse, as we call it, though old mother Grayling will call it my hiding-hole. If you get notice that anybody is coming, you have nothing to do but to go down there, shut the trap after you, and push in the bolt. Light enough enters through the chinks for you to see in the day-time ; but don't take a candle in, and mind you don't tumble over the bales and other things."

"Is it cut in the rock?" asked Smeaton.

“Oh, dear no,” replied the man. “You see it is the corner made by this floor sticking out above the other. It looks just like the rest of the house outside, and may be dug a bit down into the ground ; for there are two steps up to get out below. But that was done before my time.”

“Then one can get *out* from below ?” asked Smeaton.

“To be sure,” answered the man. “How could we get the goods *in* else ? You’ll soon see the door on the inside, though nobody can’t see it on the out ; and, should any people come looking after you, and you want to get away to sea, that’s the best way. You shall always find a boat ready, and men to jump into her too ; and we’ll take care that the way is clear for you. So now, good night, sir.”

“Stay a minute,” said Smeaton. “I might have to go in great haste, and not be able to pay you, at the moment, either for your services or my entertainment. I

should like to do so now, therefore, and also for the hire of a boat to take me to France."

"No, no, sir. As to all that," returned the man, "you must speak to my old woman. She is ready enough to take money—so don't give her too much of it ; and, for the boat, you can pay the men who take you. That is all fair. What *I* have to do is, to see that they are ready, if I don't go myself, which is likely. Good night, sir. You'll see the old woman to-morrow, sure enough."

Thus saying, he went away, and closed the door ; and Smeaton, seating himself at the table, gave himself up to thought.

He was not long in determining his course ; and what the result of his reflections was, may be judged by some words which he spoke aloud, as one is apt to do when hesitation gives place to reflection.

"He is only to be fought with his own weapons," he said. "I owe it to her, to myself, and to others. Yet, if possible, she

must be mine before we go. The occasion will justify the precipitancy."

After again pausing in thought, for a minute or two, he approached the little window, opened it, and looked out. Finding that the distance from the sill to the ground was not above five or six feet, he quietly let himself down, and walked, though with much difficulty, owing to the steepness of the hill, to the little path which led up to the well. Opposite the well, he paused ; and, striding across, so as to rest his right foot upon the opposite brim, he applied the key Van Noost had given him to that part of the chiselling in the rough stone-work which he fancied must conceal the keyhole. He had some difficulty in finding it, however ; but, at length, succeeded. Van Noost was a clever artificer. The key turned even more easily than that from which it had been modelled ; and Smeaton, satisfied that he could command access to Emmeline at any time he pleased, locked the door again, and re-

turned to his chamber at the cottage. Then, exploring his saddle-bags, he brought forth from them a little round case, very generally used by notaries of that time, which contained some sheets of writing-paper, pens, and an ink bottle ; and, seating himself at the table, he wrote a rapid letter to Lord Stair, explaining the circumstances in which he was placed.

“ It is now more than a week, my lord,” he said, “ since I wrote to your lordship, requesting you to use your influence with the government in order to obtain my formal recognition as an English subject, and offering to comply with every proper form that may be required in such a case. I stated to you that I had inviolately adhered to the promise I gave you not to meddle in any shape with political matters, but that, nevertheless, I understood measures had been taken for arresting me, notwithstanding the assurances I had received from

your lordship. Since I wrote the above letter, which, I fear, can never have reached you, I have every reason to believe that a scheme has been devised for driving me into the hands of parties opposed to the existing government.

“I was induced this morning by Sir John Newark to go over to a house called Mount Place to return the visit of its owner, and found a number of gentlemen with him, though I had been led to believe he would be alone. As I discovered at once that they were discussing questions of much political importance, I took my leave and retired, not having been, in the whole, two minutes in the house. I then rode on to my mother’s property of Keanton, where I had previously sent the good man, Van Noost, whom you know, in order to keep him out of danger. He was amusing himself, at the moment of my arrival, in casting leaden globes to replace some others which had been blown or knocked off the pinnacles of the house; but before I had

been ten minutes at Keanton, the place was taken possession of by a party of soldiers, and I and Van Noost were apprehended upon warrants previously issued, to which General C——, from a misapprehension of what the poor statuary was doing, added a charge of casting bullets for the purposes of civil war. Given into custody of one Captain Smallpiece and a party of horse, I and my fellow prisoner were taken to an inn, where the officer determined to remain for the night, although I expressed my desire to proceed to Exeter. The peasantry had previously shown themselves inclined to resist my apprehension; and here a large body of men found means to introduce themselves into the inn, and to overpower the troopers, who were mostly drunk. In the affray, Captain Smallpiece was in the act of shooting Van Noost, who had taken no part whatever in the struggle; and, to save the poor man's life, I was obliged to knock the officer down. Feeling that such a chain of circum-

stances—some of which were evidently accidental, though some were brought about for the purpose of involving me in the rash schemes of others—would form a very dangerous kind of evidence against me, and knowing the peril of being one of the first persons proceeded against in troublous times, I took advantage of the opportunity of making my escape, with the resolution of writing immediately to your lordship; a resolution which I now execute. Every word of the statement here given is true, upon my honour as a gentleman and a soldier. Since I have been here, I have held no communication with any one on political affairs. I have taken no part in any disturbances or any schemes whatever; but the assurance given me by your lordship, that I should not be molested, has been grossly violated by the authorities here, as if it was their object and intention to drive me into the arms of the disaffected. Nothing shall do so, if I can by any means avoid it; and it is my intention immediately to return to France. If I am pre-

vented from doing so, however, by any active pursuance of the sort of persecution to which I have been subjected, and I find my earnest desire to remain tranquil, and to take no part in any political affairs whatever, thus frustrated, I must of course follow those measures which I judge requisite for my own safety."

He added a few words more, in regard to the general object of his letter, took a copy of it, and addressed it to the Earl in London. After having done so, he retired to rest, and slept as tranquilly for some hours as if the course of the preceding day had been calm and smooth.

CHAPTER XI.

THERE were lights in many of the windows of Ale Manor House when Thomas Higham approached by the back way. The gates of the great court behind, however, were bolted, and the blood-hound bayed loud and deep at the man's approach ; but after he had rung the bell, and the animal had snuffed under the gates for a moment, his hoarse bark was silenced : he recognized a friend. Higham soon obtained admission, and found the household in much commotion

from the rumours which had reached Ale during the evening. Various was the aspect of the different servants whom he encountered as he was led to the presence of Sir John Newark. Those who had been but a short time in the family, were full of wonder and amazement at all the events which rumour had detailed and magnified, and did not scruple to show their surprise and curiosity. The elder servants, who knew their master and his affairs better, were calm and silent, and asked no questions whatsoever. They had observed that Sir John Newark, though he had affected much surprise at the news of his guest's apprehension, had been in reality but little affected thereby; and, when a rumour of his escape had been carried to Sir John, a glance of angry disappointment had crossed the knight's countenance, which did not escape notice. They understood him pretty well, and read such slight indications aright. We seldom reflect that we are a constant object of study to our

servants ; that we are, as it were, a model set up for them to draw in their own minds, and that, walking round us in every position of life, they have full opportunity of completing the sketch.

Led on by the butler, Higham was conducted through the great stone hall to the room in which the knight usually sat. He found him alone ; for he had sent both Emmeline and his son away, in order to reflect upon his course more at leisure. Something had gone wrong in his plans ; and they required to be rectified. He had announced, on the very first intelligence of the young Earl's capture, that he should ride in the early morning of the following day to Exeter, in order to see what could be done for him : in truth, to see what could be done for himself in regard to Keanton. In prison and in danger, Sir John thought, Smeaton would not be very difficult to deal with ; and, if he were, it would be easy to tighten his bonds a little. Moreover, another object had been gained by his ap-

prehension. The vague fears regarding Emmeline, which had taken possession of the knight's mind as soon as he discovered that his guest was unmarried, had been increasing lately with a sort of instinct ; and he rejoiced to have his guest removed.

Though a bold man, as we have seen, Sir John Newark was also a timid one. It seems a paradox, yet it is true ; and similar cases are not unfrequent. He was bold in devising, bold even in executing, schemes for his own aggrandizement ; but he was timid in fruition. He never fancied himself safe. He was always taking precautions. The only imagination he had, was for difficulties and dangers ; and one bold scheme for the attainment of a particular object, was continually succeeded by another for the purpose of securing what had been obtained. It is strange, but true, that most of the cruel acts and many of the rash ones found on the page of history, had their source in cowardice.

Smeaton's escape was therefore doubly

disagreeable to him ; and, when he heard the bell of the great court ring, and imagined that his noble guest might have returned to seek shelter in his house, he instantly set to work to hold a somewhat tumultuous counsel in his own breast as to how he should demean himself to attain his double object. The entrance of the servant instead of the master, however, put a stop to these considerations ; and he asked impatiently—

“ Well—well, where is your Lord ? ”

“ Really, sir, I don’t know,” replied the man, who, having received but vague directions from the young Earl, thought himself privileged to lie at liberty. “ I did not know that I should not find him here ; but they say he has not come ; and he took the road towards Keanton, sure enough. Perhaps, I had better set out to seek him.”

Sir John thought before he replied.

“ Then this rumour of his having been rescued, is true ? ” he said, at length.

Higham nodded, and added to that mute mode of assent, the words,

“A great pack of country fellows did it. Most of the soldiers were drunk, and were overpowered in a minute. I had no hand in it, however.”

Sir John leaned his head upon his hand, and mused.

“Then you positively do not know where he is?” he inquired.

“No, really, I cannot say, Sir John,” answered Higham. “I dare say, at Keanton, hiding amongst his tenants.”

“Not unlikely,” said the knight. “I think you had better not go just at present. Wait here to-night, and get some refreshments. To-morrow, perhaps, your Lord may send for you ; and, if not, and you go to seek for him, you shall bear him a message from me.”

“Would it not be better for him to come here, sir ?” asked Higham, ever willing to probe the minds of those with whom he was

brought in contact. "I think he would be safer in this out-of-the-way place than anywhere."

"On no account,—on no account," exclaimed the knight, caught in the trap laid for him. "Of course," he added, after a moment's reflection, "suspicion will be directed towards this house from the fact of my intimacy with your Lord. The place will be searched, probably more than once ; and his own safety requires that he should avoid the neighbourhood. His tenantry at Keanton, probably, can conceal him for the time ; and, as soon as pursuit has somewhat abated, it will be well for him to get out of the county, if not out of the kingdom. I speak against my own wishes and my own views," he continued, seeing an expression on the man's face which he did not clearly understand. "Nothing would give me so much pleasure as to see your master, and to offer him every assistance in my power ; but to persuade him to come here, would be

leading him to destruction. If I knew where to find him, I would go and visit him ; for I have no personal fears in the matter, my good friend, whatever you may think."

"Oh, dear no, sir," answered Higham. "I don't think at all. I dare say, however, I shall very soon hear where my Lord is to be found ; for he told me, when last I saw him, to come to Ale Manor ; and whenever I hear, I will let your worship know."

"Do so—do so," said Sir John Newark ; "and now go and get yourself some supper. I dare say, you are hungry after all this bad work."

"As a fox-hunter," rejoined Higham, and turned towards the door ; but Sir John thought he might as well add a stroke or two to the picture of danger he had been drawing ; and he called to the man, just as he was quitting the room—

"Tell my people, if any party should come to search the house during the night, not

to open the doors till they have my orders."

"I won't fail, sir," replied Higham ; and then, closing the door, he threaded his way through the passages towards the servants' part of the house, saying to himself, "Now for the old housekeeper. I wonder my Lord trusts that sly old hunk. But I must do as he has told me. She must be playing double somewhere, that is clear enough ; but whether with my Lord and the young lady, or with worshipful Sir John, I cannot tell."

Quietly tapping at good Mrs. Culpepper's door, he went in ; and the eagerness with which she looked towards him, showed at once that his visit was not altogether unexpected. She made him a sign to shut the door, and then said, abruptly—

"Have you any news from your master ? And is he safe ?"

"Yes, ma'am," replied the man. "He is quite safe, and told me to tell you—"

“Hush!” interrupted the old woman, putting her finger to her lips. “Not now! Go and get yourself some refreshment in the servants’ hall. There are not more than two or three up. Pretend to fall asleep in your chair. They will soon leave you; and I will come when I am certain that all is quiet.—Stay, I will order your supper.” Then, approaching close to him, she asked, in a whisper, “Where is your Lord?”

“Here, in Ale village,” returned Higham, in the same low tone; and, opening the door, the old housekeeper passed out.

Crossing the end of the passage at the very moment, as if going towards his own bedroom, was Sir John Newark himself; and, raising her voice, without a moment’s hesitation, Mrs. Culpepper said, in a somewhat sharp tone—

“Pray, Sir John, is this man to have supper at this time of night?”

“Certainly,” replied her master. “He

has had a very fatiguing day; and it is not *his* fault that he is late."

"Well then, fellow, come with me," said the housekeeper, walking away with him to the servants' hall. There she ordered him some supper, in a cold and commanding tone, and left him to enjoy it.

Higham played his part well. He ate and drank, nodded, took another cup of ale, and then seemed to fall fast asleep. The three servants who were still up, dropped off one by one, and left him, with a kitchen lamp on the table, to follow when he thought fit to wake. He remained for half an hour longer, however, undisturbed, and had nearly fallen asleep in reality, when Mrs. Culpepper again appeared, and quietly closed the door behind her.

"Now, what says your lord?" she demanded, speaking very low.

"He bade me tell you, ma'am," replied the servant, "that he is quite well and in

safety, and begs you to let those know who may be anxious."

The old housekeeper slowly nodded her head, to show that she comprehended, and then said—

"What more?"

"Why, only that he is here, in Ale, I was to say," answered the man, "at the house of a fisherman, named Grayling, and that he hopes, in spite of all that has happened, to be able to carry out what was proposed, with your good help."

Again Mrs. Culpepper nodded her head, and merely asked—

"Is that all?"

"He told me to ask you, ma'am," said Higham, "if it would be safe for him to venture here; for he much wishes to speak with you and somebody else, whose name he did not mention—perhaps he means Master Richard."

"Perfectly safe, if he could come in private," replied Mrs. Culpepper; "but most dangerous if he were to be seen.—Yet stay.

He is quite secure at Grayling's for two or three days. Now, mark what you must do. Rise early to-morrow, before daylight, go quietly down to him at the cottage, and tell him what I say—he will understand you. Tell him, the means of coming in, in private, he shall have by you to-morrow night. I cannot get the key at present. As soon as you have delivered the message, come back here, and mind you close and lock the doors behind you just as you found them. Take care, likewise, to make no noise."

"If I am to go early in the morning," observed the man, "I had better stay where I am. I will put the edge of the tankard under my head, and then my nodding will wake me, from time to time."

"Don't put it too often to your lips," retorted Mrs. Culpepper, gravely; "for your master's safety and happiness depend on your carefulness just now."

"Lord bless you, ma'am, I've been accustomed to these things," said Higham, "and

could sit with a tankard of strong waters under my nose for a month without ever touching a drop, if there was any business to be done at the end of it."

"You will not lose your reward if you are faithful," said the old woman ; "and so, good night."

As soon as she was gone, Higham murmured to himself—

"She is on the right side, I *do* think. She must be a wonderful cunning old woman."

With this reflection, he folded his arms on the table, laid his head upon them, and in a few minutes was fast asleep. Every time the house-clock struck, however, he looked up and counted ; and, at the hour of four, shook off his drowsiness, took a tolerable draught from the flagon, and then crept quietly out of the servants'-hall. He had the choice of three doors by which to make his exit. That of the great hall, however, had, to his knowledge, a very bad habit of creaking on its hinges. That

which led into the court led also to the blood-hound ; and, though he was not at all afraid of the animal's bite, he was afraid of his bark. There was a little door, however, which led into a lesser court, formed expressly, it would seem, for the entertainment of the men and maid servants of the family ; and by this convenient passage Higham took his way out, with little difficulty and no noise.

Nothing interrupted him on his way to the village ; and there, by the lights he saw in several of the cottages, he perceived that many of the inmates were up, preparing for some of their lawful or unlawful occupations. A light was in old Grayling's house also ; and, looking through the window, which had no shutters but plenty of bars, he saw the old man with a short pipe in his mouth, lighting the fire in the kitchen.

Tapping at the window, Higham soon brought the fisherman to his door ; and, with one accustomed to somewhat perilous

enterprises, very little explanation was needful.

The young Earl was soon wakened, and the message delivered. That message threw Smeaton into a fit of thought, which lasted, however, not long. Impulse, impulse! It is always getting the better of us, till it is worn out and has lost its spring with years. It was very powerful, I fear, in Smeaton's case, when, rising and dressing himself as rapidly as possible, he said to the man :

“ You must go back. Get speech of Mrs. Culpepper as soon as possible, and tell her that she will find me in the priest's chamber. Say that I am sure I can get back unobserved by passing through the trees, and that, as speed is everything, it will be better to form our plans quickly. If she cannot come this morning, I will be there again at night. You must come with me, however, in the first instance.—Now, lock that door.”

The man obeyed, with some surprise ;

but was more surprised still when he saw his master descend from the window as he had done on the preceding night. Being a great deal shorter, he had some difficulty, to say the truth, in following, but, with Smeaton's assistance, succeeded at length, and reached the ground in safety.

"Now go on before me," said the Earl; "and, if you meet any persons coming down this way, say something to them in a loud tone. Keep straight on that path."

"Oh, sir, I know it very well," returned the man. "Many a time I have been down here since we came."

"Hush!" said Smeaton. "Go on, and keep silence."

Doing as he was bid, with the darkness rapidly giving way to twilight, the man walked up towards Ale Manor, taking a quick, furtive glance behind him from time to time to see whither his master was going. Suddenly, however, when he turned round to look, the young nobleman had disappeared; and it is unnecessary to in-

form the reader which way he had bent his steps.

The moment the stone door beyond the wall was closed, Smeaton found himself in utter darkness ; but, feeling his way with his hands, he reached the steps upwards, and soon after began to gain air and light. Nobody came near him for somewhat more than a quarter of an hour ; and Smeaton's spirit grew impatient of the restraint. The moments were passing quickly, on which so much depended ; and yet no progress was made.

“ The sun must have risen,” he thought ; “ and perhaps Emmeline is already up. It is strange I hear nothing of my old nurse ! Perhaps that foolish fellow has forgotten his errand, or missed his opportunity, or committed some other blunder. —I must speak with her at once, if at all ; and we shall soon have the whole household up.”

As he thus thought, impatience overcame all other considerations ; and he approached the door which led into the

state bed-room beyond. No great difficulty presented itself in pushing back the panel ; and, making as little noise as he could, he issued forth from the hiding-place. The room was vacant. After pausing a moment and listening for a step, he quietly opened the door and went out into the passage. Nobody was there ; but the door of Emmeline's room was close beside him ; and he thought he heard the sound of some one moving within. The temptation was too great to be resisted ; and he tapped gently at the door. At first, there was no reply : she did not hear the tap ; but again a sound was audible within, like the quiet opening of a window ; and he tapped once more.

The next instant, he heard a light step near the door ; and it opened. Surprise, which was the first expression on Emmeline's beautiful face, changed in a moment to joy ; and, forgetting all things in the untutored wildness of her delight, she cast herself upon his bosom and wept.

Smeaton held her to his heart and kissed her tenderly, drawing her in silence towards the state chamber ; but Emmeline whispered :

“ No. Come in here. It will be safer. This is my own sitting-room. No one will come hither.” And she led him into that large, airy chamber in which she was first introduced to the sight of the reader.

Impossible would it be to attempt any detailed account of the brief conversation which ensued—so much was to be told, so much to be spoken of, so many words of tenderness and affection to be uttered. Emmeline poured forth her whole heart. She knew not, she could not conceive, any motive, when once that heart was given, and its love acknowledged, for concealing, from him she loved, anything that passed within it. She spoke of all she had suffered since the moment when she heard of his arrest ; of all the grief, of all the anxiety, of all the sleepless thought. She spoke, too, of her joy to

see him safe and free. But the voice of happiness is still and low ; and Smeaton had to read one half of her sensations in her eyes.

As but very little time could be spared, however, he told her as speedily as possible all that he proposed. He explained that his purpose of returning at once to France was unaltered, if she would still consent to go with him, but thought it would be far better that she should give him her hand before they took their departure ; adding, he had but little doubt that he could so arrange that the ceremony should be duly and irrevocably performed.

She replied at once, without hesitation or reluctance—

“ Whatever you tell me, Henry, I will do ; and it will be much better that I should go as your wife. I am yours altogether ; and, if occasionally, since I promised to go with you, feelings of doubt—perhaps, I might almost say, of self-

reproach—have come across me, for so joyfully consenting to quit the protector of my childhood, those feelings have all passed. His conduct towards you, his betrayal of you, would remove all scruples. All was explained to me last night, and I never heard of darker baseness. To me, too, he has behaved very ill, and to my parents worse. What I looked upon as kindness and protection, have been, in reality, policy and imprisonment ; and I have every right to leave him who has no right to detain me.—Hark !”

Her exclamation was caused by a sound at the lock of the door. The next instant the door was opened, and Mrs. Culpepper appeared. She showed no surprise, but much agitation ; and, without closing the door, she beckoned to Smeaton, saying, in a low tone—

“ This is madness, Henry. Indeed, my lord, you must fly this instant. You can return at night ; but do not come out of the priest’s chamber till I knock for you.

Come, my lord, come. Sir John is already moving in his room."

With one more embrace, Smeaton and Emmeline parted ; and, holding up her finger to enjoin silence, Mrs. Culpepper led the young nobleman back to the priest's chamber, closing the aperture behind him. She then returned, at once, to Emmeline's apartment, and, having shut the door, said—

"Run into your bed-room, dear lady, and answer me aloud through the door."

Emmeline did as she was asked ; and then the old housekeeper put several questions as to her night's rest, and several matters of ordinary interest, receiving somewhat wondering replies. But the old woman was politic ; and she was still speaking, when Sir John Newark knocked at the door, saying—

"Who are you talking to, Emmeline?"

Mrs. Culpepper instantly opened the door, and replied—

"It is I, Sir John."

Her voice was as calm and quiet, her manner as unruffled and staid as usual ; but Sir John Newark beckoned her out of the room, and then said, in a low tone—

“ I heard a noise as if the entrance to the priest’s room had been rolled backward and forward.”

“ Yes, Sir John,” replied the old lady. “ By your own orders, I go frequently to see that it opens and shuts easily. I always go early or late ; but I thought I heard the young lady moving in her room ; and I went to see what could have got her up so early.”

Sir John Newark did not speak for a minute, but looked at the housekeeper quietly from under his eyebrows ; and she saw at once that he doubted her. She was too much accustomed, however, to meet and frustrate his suspicions to be at all alarmed, though she felt some degree of apprehension, from various causes, when he said, at length—

“ I have not been in that priest’s room

for two or three years. I should like to look round it again."

"Very well, sir," replied Mrs. Culpepper, adding internally—"Pray God the dear boy be gone!"

Sir John Newark moved into the state-room, with a certain quickness of step which showed how little satisfied he was; but the old proverb, "The more haste the worse speed," was verified in his case. He walked at once up to the head of the bed to move it back; but he had either forgotten the trick, or he mismanaged it in his hurry; so that after one or two efforts he was obliged to have recourse to Mrs. Culpepper, who, in order to avoid all suspicion, opened the entrance at once. Sir John Newark instantly stepped in, gave a quick glance round the room, and then advanced to the door leading to the passages below. Finding himself surrounded by darkness, however, he stopped at the end of the first two or three steps, and said, somewhat sharply, "Bring me a light."

The old housekeeper retired to obey ; and, during her absence, which was as short as possible, her master remained with his head bent and his ear intently listening. When he had obtained the light, he walked quickly forward, followed by Mrs. Culpepper, and did not pause till he reached the stone door which led out upon the hill-side. He put his hand upon the lock ; but it was fastened ; and then, holding the candle to the little niche at the side, he looked in. The key was in its place ; and he retired satisfied.

CHAPTER XII.

It was nine o'clock before Sir John Newark entered the room where preparations had been made for breakfast. He found his son Richard talking gaily to Emmeline in the window, while she replied with a bright and smiling face. Although, considering his designs respecting Emmeline and his son, it might be supposed that such a sight was pleasant to him, yet that poisoner of all peace, suspicion, would not have it so. Emmeline's excessive anxiety

during the preceding day, after tidings had been received of Smeaton's capture, had not escaped his notice, although she had striven hard to conceal the emotions which were busy in her bosom ; and now she seemed so bright and cheerful that he said to himself, " She must have had some intelligence."

He resolved to watch her carefully ; but, happily for Emmeline, emotions as strong, though very different from, those of the day before, had still possession of her. They were more joyful, more hopeful, but perhaps even more thrilling ; and, several times during the meal, she fell into deep fits of thought. Suspicion is always vacillating ; and Sir John began to doubt whether he had been right or not. His son contributed, too, to remove the fancy which possessed him by saying, with one of his wild laughs, towards the middle of breakfast, " I was telling Emmy when you came in, father, that we should have this

Colonel Lord back again here very soon. Great fish always lie on the same bank."

"I do not know, Dick," replied his father, gravely. "I think it is very improbable you will ever see him again. If he is wise, he will betake himself to France immediately. Otherwise he may very well chance to leave his head on the scaffold some morning."

Richard laughed, exclaiming, "Well then, he had a great deal better kick it before him across the sea. A precious football it would make."

Emmeline gave a slight shudder ; and Sir John dropped the conversation till the meal was ended, when he said, "The Earl's servant is here, as I dare say you know, Dick ; but he has had no news of his master, and fancies he must be at Keanton."

"Oh, I know Higham is here," answered the lad ; "for I had a long talk with him just before you sent for him. He told me all about the rescue. What fun it must have been to see those lubberly soldiers all

tied, and lying heads and tails like herrings in a barrel! I wish I had been there. I should have liked to help poor Smeaton, and leather the jacket of that long captain. Higham says his master knocked him down just as he did the Earl of Stair's great bully, and vows that the punch-bowls jumped up a foot off the table with the shock of his fall."

"Well, Dick," observed his father, "the servant talks of riding over by the tops of the downs to Keanton to see for his lord. Now, as you know there is nothing I would so willingly do as assist this noble gentleman, you and I will ride over with the man to within half a mile of Keanton. Then, if he finds his master, we can establish some communication with him, and perhaps assist him."

He paused a moment; and then, turning to Emmeline, he added: "I fear you cannot go with us, my dear child. Maiden modesty forbids your running about the country to inquire for a young cavalier. I

think, too, it might be as well for you to remain within during our absence. There will be parties of soldiers, doubtless, scouring the country in various directions ; and they are neither the most civil or civilized."

"I have no inclination to go out," replied Emmeline, simply. "I am tired with all the anxiety of yesterday."

Sir John Newark, his son, and Smeaton's servant, were soon on horseback ; and, without any other attendant, they set out, turning sharp to the left after quitting the gates of the Manor House, and winding round the edge of the woods till they reached nearly the top of Ale Head. Thence pursuing their course across the downs, with the high cliffs beetling over the sea at the distance of about a quarter of a mile on their left, they continued their course, alternately rising and descending up the brown hills and down into the green solitary hollows which extend fifteen or sixteen miles along the coast.

At the distance of about seven miles

from Ale Manor, however, they came to one of these hollows, which assumed more the appearance of a regular valley, with a bright and beautiful little stream flowing down it towards the sea. Here they halted ; Higham received instructions to ride on before, while the other two slowly followed ; and Sir John added :

“ We will wait at the distance of about half a mile from Keanton. Tell your Lord that we are there, if he thinks it safe to come and speak with us. If not, bring us some tidings of him ; but enter the village very cautiously, lest the good people of Keanton should have fallen into the hands of the Philistines.”

Higham nodded his head and rode away. Sir John Newark, who had been very silent during the first part of the journey, now entered into an eager conversation with his son, which, as I must refer to it afterwards, I need not notice more particularly here. Suffice it to say, that the father spoke earnestly and ap-

parently impressively, and that the son, though at first he listened with eagerness and looks of surprise, and strove afterwards to fix his wandering attention upon his father's words, soon resumed his usual manner, and laughed and talked gaily and wildly, flitting round the subject rather than resting upon it.

After they had reached the spot which had been fixed upon as their halting-place, Sir John and his young companion remained for about three quarters of an hour in expectation, Richard getting off and on his horse, throwing pebbles into the stream, and showing many signs of impatience. Sir John marked him with a slight smile ; and at length Higham made his appearance again, trotting quietly and unconcernedly down towards them.

“ He is not there, Sir John,” said the man, riding up ; “ at least so all the people say ; but they are mighty stingy of their words this morning. However, one thing is certain. They have heard

nothing of the Exeter people ; and I make out pretty surely that my Lord is not very far off, and that they know it."

" Ah, how do you make that out ?" asked Sir John Newark.

" Why, one man began talking about a stranger having come to Blacklands late last night ; but his wife stopped his mouth in a minute ; and, when I asked where Blacklands was and what it was, he gave a rambling sort of answer. But, I believe, it must be some farm near at hand."

" It is five miles off," replied Sir John, immediately ; " a wild and solitary place, shut out from the whole neighbourhood, and a very likely spot indeed for a fugitive to take refuge in. We had better ride over there.—You are sure there are no soldiers in the village ?"

" Not a man, sir," answered Higham ; " and besides, they have got people on the top of the hill to look out."

" Well then, we will take that way, as

it is the shortest," said the knight—"Come, Richard."

"I think I shall go back," said Richard Newark. "I am tired of this work. I'll go back and have a gossip with Emmy."

"Do not be rash, Dick," replied his father, holding up his finger, with a smile. "Remember, slow degrees at first! You do not scare birds that you want to drive into a net."

The lad laughed, and saying, "Oh, I'll not be rash," turned his horse's head and cantered quietly away. When he had gone about a couple of miles, however, he fell into deep thought, took his feet out of the stirrups, let the reins drop on the horse's neck, and, for more than half an hour, proceeded at a walk. Then, as if suddenly rousing himself, he whistled a bit of a light air, put his horse into a quick pace again, and rode on to the Manor House.

It was very usual with Richard to stand

in the stable-yard after a ride, till he had seen saddle and bridle removed and the horse rubbed down ; but now he left his beast immediately in the hands of the groom, and walked across the court till he came to a place where a large Irish eagle was chained to a heavy perch. The bird was fierce and untameable ; but Richard approached it without fear, and took hold of the padlock on its leg. He had hardly done so when it struck him with its bill more than once ; but he proceeded boldly till he had unfastened the chain from its leg, and given it a vehement push from the perch. The bird instantly took wing, and soared into the sky. Richard Newark laughed aloud, and, without looking after it, wiped some drops of blood from his forehead, and walked into the house. He pursued his way quietly through the passages, looked into the lesser and the greater saloon, and then, mounting the stairs, walked up to the door of Emmeline's sitting-room. There he paused a moment ; and then, murmur-

ing : " What a fool I am !—but I knew that long ago," he opened the door without knocking, and went in. Emmeline was seated near the window, gazing down upon the woods below ; but she turned instantly at her cousin's step, and started up, exclaiming—

" What is the matter, Richard ? What has happened ? The blood is streaming down your face !"

" Nothing at all has happened, Emmy dear," replied Richard. " Only, as often occurs in this world, a friend took me for an enemy, and pecked my pate. Come here and sit down, and I will tell you all about it, though there is nothing worth hearing to tell. Sit down here, Emmy," he continued, again wiping away the blood. " There, put yourself in that chair ; and I will sit on the stool at your feet, as I used to do before they sent me to school to see what part of my brain was sound."

" But what have you been doing, Rich-

ard ?” said Emmeline, seating herself as he desired her.

“Nothing but giving liberty to an eagle,” replied the boy ; “and he pecked me while I was unchaining his foot.”

“Oh, you should not have done that, Dickon,” said his fair companion. “Your father will be angry.”

“Why so ?” demanded the lad. “The bird was mine. He was given to me ; and I had a right to do what I liked with him. —Well, Emmy,” he continued, after a moment or two, “we have heard nothing of Smeaton ; and a dull ride we have had of it. So I left my daddy to trot on his way, and came back.”

Emmeline was silent ; for did she not wish to speak upon the subject of her lover at all ; but Richard went on in a rambling sort of tone, saying,

“Ay, dull enough it was ; and, while we were waiting for Tom Higham’s coming back, my father had some serious conversation

with me, as he calls it. I hate serious conversation, Emmy."

"But you should always attend to what your father says to you, Richard," observed Emmeline, "and do everything that he tells you, *which is right*."

The last words were uttered after a moment's pause, and in a lower tone.

"Very true," replied Richard, half laughing. "What you say is always true, Emmy ; but the worst of it is—I suppose the soft place in my brain prevents it—my father and I can never agree upon what *is* quite right. The fact is, dear girl, I see one side, and he sees the other, as the old story-book has it ; and, if one side is black, and the other side is white, we can never agree in opinion. Do you know what he was telling me to-day ?"

"No, indeed," answered Emmeline. "I cannot conceive."

"Why, he was telling me," said Richard,

looking down and speaking in an absent manner—"he was telling me that he intended me to marry you and you to marry me ; that it must be ; that the fate and fortune of us both depended upon it."

Emmeline trembled violently ; and, as the shoulder of Richard Newark rested against her arm, he felt how much agitation his words produced. The moment after, Emmeline felt his hand laid gently upon hers, and she asked, in a low voice,

"What did you say to him, Richard ?"

"Nothing much to the purpose," replied Richard ; "for he set all my thoughts rambling and galloping like huntsmen at the field-halloo. I laughed and talked as if I had been very happy ; but I was thinking all the time, Emmeline. First, I thought (what I never thought of before) how very happy it would be to marry you—and how you might make anything

you liked of me—and what a changed being I should be if you were my wife—and how dearly I should love you—and how I *do* love you—and a great many other foolish things.—Nay, don't shake, dear Emmy! There is no fear with your own poor Dick."

"I am not afraid, Dick," responded Emmeline, pressing the hand he had laid upon hers; "for I know right well that, whatever faults your head may have, your heart has none."

"That's a good girl," returned Richard Newark.—"Well, I thought a great deal more still. After all these foolish things had had their gallop, I thought I would not marry you for the whole world; or if all the kings and queens in the world were to try to force us

"Indeed, Richard?" said Emmeline, with a faint smile. "You had good reasons, doubtless."

"To be sure I had," replied the lad. 'In the first place, I know that I am not

worthy of you, that I am not fit for you. In the next place, I know that you would not like it; that you love another; and that, if you were driven to marry me, you would always be thinking of him, and loving him, and not me. I should be your jailor, and not your husband; and I should be wretched too; for I should be always flying after your thoughts, like a sparrow-hawk after a lark, to see if you were not thinking of your lover all the time.—You know you love him, Emmy. You love him very well, very dearly; and I do not wonder at you.”

The rosy colour that spread over her face, and neck, and forehead would have been sufficient answer; but she said, in a low, though distinct tone—

“I do.”

There was a pause, of a moment or two; and then Richard said—

“What a fool I should be, Emmeline—a greater fool than I am; and that is bad enough—if I suffered my wits to be set

wool-gathering by any nonsense about ever marrying you, or putting Smeaton out of your head.—But still, Emmy,” he continued, in a tender tone, “you will love me after a sort—as you always have—as a kind friend—as a sister.”

“Indeed I will, Richard,” exclaimed Emmeline, earnestly, “and love you all the better for your conduct this day. Now I know what you mean by setting the eagle free: you would fain set Smeaton free of all difficulties, if you could.”

“No, dear Emmy,” pursued Richard; “I did not exactly mean that. Indeed I do not clearly know that I meant anything; but, as I rode homeward, and thought how happy you might be if people left you to do just what you liked, I wished to help you to do so—to make you quite free; and then, when I saw the poor eagle in the court, I thought how happy he would be if he could soar away in the skies again at his own pleasure; and then the thought came across me of what my father

would say if I unchained the bird's leg ; and I answered myself, that I had a right—that the bird was mine—that he had been given to me, and so had you ; and, therefore, I determined to set you both free. I do not know how it was ; but, somehow, there seemed a likeness between your fate and his ; though when he fluttered his wings, and struck at me, as I unchained him, I said to myself, Emmeline will know better ; and so she does.”

“Indeed she does, Richard,” replied Emmeline ; “and she will never mistake you for an enemy.”

“But do you know, Emmeline,” continued her cousin, “that I have a strange notion it would be better for us both to dissemble a little ? for I fancy my father has some suspicion about you and Smeaton.”

“I fear I am a bad dissembler,” returned Emmeline, incautiously. “I cannot but dread that Sir John sees I have been dissembling with him lately.”

Richard, however, did not ask in what respect, but rambled on as usual.

“Oh, we all dissemble more than we are aware,” he said. “Here, I never thought to deceive my father in anything; and yet, for some reason—either from something in himself or in me—I never can tell him all I think. I never can turn my heart inside out before him, as I can with you. When I should most wish to say all, and make him understand everything that is going on inside of me, some devil, I think it is, comes and stops me, and makes me go rambling away with vague answers about nothing at all, which he may take one way or another, just as he likes. But what I mean is, not that we should just exactly dissemble; for, as you love me well, and I love you well, it is not dissembling to seem to do so. I would only have you look happy when I am with you; and I’ll try to make you so too; for I’ll talk to you of Smeaton; and we’ll plan plans and plot

plots about him, and all sorts of pleasant things."

"There can be no harm in that, Richard," replied Emmeline, in a graver tone than her young cousin had expected; for he was trying, though hardly knowing it, to win her mind away from all heavy thoughts. But, to say sooth, Emmeline was somewhat puzzled how to act towards him. There was so much candour, so much frank kindness, in his whole conduct, that her heart smote her for not telling him all she knew and all she intended. She remembered, however, that the secrets in her heart were not altogether her own—that she had only a divided right over them; and, though it cost her some pain, she was silent.

Richard went on talking with her even after he heard the sounds which accompanied his father's return; and, when he left her and went down the stairs, although he was inclined to be more thoughtful than perhaps he had

ever felt in his life, he assumed a gay and joyous look.

“ Well, Dick,” said his father, when he met him ; “ where have you been all this time ?”

“ I have been sitting with Emmeline ever since I came back,” replied the lad ; “ and we have been talking of all sorts of things. She is a dear girl indeed.”

“ But what is the matter with your forehead ?” said his father. “ Did your horse fall ?”

“ Oh, no,” cried Richard. “ It was that brute of an eagle. I was tired of seeing him sitting moping on his perch ; so I went to unchain him, and he pecked me on the head.”

“ Why, you foolish boy, you have not set him free ?” exclaimed Sir John.

“ Oh, yes, I have,” answered Richard ; “ and he pecked me for my pains. But Emmeline did not peck me, whatever I said to her. So I care not. No chance of my

being hen-pecked, father." And, with a gay laugh, he turned away.

Sir John Newark was well pleased with what he had done. "Women are strange beings," he said. "Who knows but what this boy's wild, dashing, lighted-hearted thoughtlessness—so like his weak mother—may not be metal more attractive in the girl's eyes than soberer, sounder reason? At all events, he will be a check and a guard upon her; and even supposing her fancy has kindled into thoughts of love in the society of this young Earl, it can only render something for love to lean upon more needful to her when he is away. I have seen such things. It will do. I am glad I spoke to the boy and told him my intentions."

Sir John Newark thought he had more reason to congratulate himself still, when, a few hours afterwards, he received a peremptory summons to attend the authorities at Exeter on the following day. He mused for a minute or two before he returned an

answer ; but, in the end, he determined to assume a bold tone ; and, calling for the messenger, he told him to inform those who sent him, that he (Sir John) would come right willingly, provided he was assured before noon that his house would be subject to no violence, and his family to no annoyance or insult, as on a former occasion.

“ Hints are given in this letter,” he said, “ of a suspicion that the Earl of Eskdale is harbouring in this house or neighbourhood. Tell the high-sheriff, who seems taking upon him the office of Lord Lieutenant, that, after the proofs of loyalty which I have lately given, no such suspicion should be entertained ; but, before you go, and while your horse is feeding, I insist upon it that, by search or cross-examination of the servants, and by inquiry in the village, you ascertain whether there be any ground whatever for such a doubt. Satisfy yourself fully, and then report accordingly : first to me, and then to those who sent you. I shall set off at eleven to-morrow for

Aleton, and will thence go on to Exeter, if I am met there by a full and proper assurance that, when I return, I shall not find my house has been visited by a party of soldiers while I have been allured to a distance."

The man, who was a person of somewhat superior station and intelligence, took advantage of the permission given to him, and made himself, as he thought, perfectly certain that no one, in Ale Manor House at least, knew where the Earl of Eskdale was. The village, too, he visited ; but there he got gruff and indifferent answers, and once or twice became somewhat afraid of pursuing his inquiries. Perhaps these fears tended to make him more easily satisfied than he otherwise would have been ; but the conclusion he came to was, that the rough fishermen knew nothing of the matter, and did not like be to troubled with things that concerned them not. Before he departed, he saw Sir John Newark again, and told him

the result of his inquiries. Sir John was very gracious ; for the result was as satisfactory to him as it could be to any one.

“No,” he said to himself, “no. He is at Blacklands, clear enough, though they would not own it. Or else this man, whom they spoke of going towards Exmouth, may have been he.”

He dismissed the messenger, however, with a fee, as was not uncustomary in those venal times, and rested more tranquilly than he had done the night before, only wishing that he could hold some communication with the young Earl for a day or two, to fix his meditated grasp upon Keanton.

CHAPTER XIII.

It was about nine o'clock at night when two persons on foot approached the little hamlet of Aleton. One of them advanced a little before the other, as if to reconnoitre ; but all was still and quiet in the place ; and even the small public-house, unused, in that remote district, to late visitors, was closed. Light could be seen within, indeed, through the chinks of the rude window-shutters ; and it is probable that the latch of the door would have yielded

to the hand of any belated traveller ; but there was no other sign of active life to be perceived without.

The two persons of whom I have spoken, however, passed by the door of the inn, and approached a house—the only other dwelling which deserved the name—a little farther on the road to Exeter. Stepping up to the door, the shorter of the two travellers knocked with his hand ; but the application producing no response from within, he was fain, though apparently very unwilling to make a noise, to take hold of an iron wire which hung at the side of the door with a bunch of hammered iron at the end of it, and give a gentle pull. A tinkling sound was immediately heard, and then the voice of a woman, saying aloud, to some one in an inner room, as she moved along the passage—

“ I dare say it is nothing but old Drayton dead, and they have come to talk to you about the funeral.”

The next instant, the door was opened ;

and Van Noost (for he was the summoner) inquired if Parson Thickett were at home.

“Oh dear, yes, Master Smith,” replied the servant (for people even in those days called themselves Jack Smith when they sought concealment) ; “and he will be very glad to see you. He could not think what had become of you. Is this gentleman your friend ?”

Van Noost nodded his head and entered the house, followed by Smeaton. The maid shut and bolted the door again, and then led them on into the parson’s little parlour, where they found that reverend personage enjoying himself according to his evening wont. There was one lighted candle on the table ; but the room, though small, was obscure ; for a thick cloud of tobacco-smoke floated in it. On the hob of the vacant grate lay the pipe from which that smoke had proceeded ; and close at the parson’s elbow was a tall bottle containing some sort of spirits, a plate and knife with a lemon, and a pot of sugar. Be-

tween him and the candle-stick, however, was an open Greek book in old and tattered binding ; for Parson Thickett was an erudite man, notwithstanding some little failings. In person, he was fatter than Van Noost, and of a very different sort of fatness. His limbs were large, but seemed almost disjointed, or at best held loosely together by the lax integuments that covered them. His stomach was large and prominent, betraying beneath his cassock—for he was generally in canonicals—a vast hemisphere of black. His face was somewhat coarse, it must be acknowledged. He had a large ear and a large lip, and, not contented with a large chin, he had two of them. There was a good deal of shrewdness, however, and a certain portion of fun about his grey, watery eye ; and his whole face lighted up with jovial good humour as soon as he saw the statuary.

“ Ha, my worthy friend !” he cried, starting up with greater agility than might

have been expected, and grasping Van Noost's hand warmly. "Where have you been so long? I thought the Philistines were upon you, by Jove. What of the brasses? What of the monuments? What of the inscriptions? By Jove, I thought you had left your work half done; and it might have remained long enough undone for me; for scrubbing brass and marble is no part of my calling. I love my flock well enough; but, when once I've got them under ground, I've done with them.—Ha! who is this gentleman?"

"A friend of mine," replied Van Noost, "who has come to talk to your reverence about a little business."

"He is welcome," cried the jolly parson. "Sir, you are welcome. We will talk of business presently. Now, we'll have a bowl of punch, and fresh pipes.—Betty, Betty!"

Smeaton tried to persuade him that he was in haste, and could not stay; but Parson Thickett would take no denial.

“I will have my way,” he cried, laughing. “I will have my way, by Jove, for this time. You shall have your way the next time, upon my sacred word of honour.”

“Indeed ?” said Smeaton.

“Of a verity,” returned the parson, “unless you ask me for the tithe pig that was brought in this morning. That is a reservation.”

The glasses and pipes were brought in, fresh hot water procured, and the brewing commenced ; but, as soon as the door was shut, Smeaton thought he might as well begin upon the subject of his visit.

“I will certainly hold the tithe pig reserved,” he said ; “for I trust to be able to increase your reverence’s store of pigs instead of diminishing them.”

“Ay, indeed !” ejaculated the parson, squeezing a lemon hard between a pair of pincers. “I think I know what you are come about. I heard all the news this morning from the packman—how they are up in

Northumberland, and how the King has been proclaimed in Scotland, and all the rest of it. Well, well. I am no fighting man ; but the King shall have my prayers ; and Smith here can tell you that I have well indoctrinated my congregation. There is not one of them who does not say, over his beer—or his cider, if he comes from the other side of the hills—‘Here’s to him over the water!’ ”

“Nay, my reverend friend, you are making a mistake,” replied Smeaton. “My business is altogether personal. I want you to perform the marriage ceremony for myself and a young lady.”

“That I will, my lad, that I will,” exclaimed the parson, joyously. “It is the function which I perform most willingly ; for there is always something merry to be said at the beginning, and always something good to be eaten at the end.”

“I fear there will not be, in this instance,” observed Smeaton, gravely ; “for no wedding feast will be prepared.”

“Never mind, never mind!” retorted the parson. “There is some fun in matrimony, at all events. I’ll buckle you so fast that you shall neither of you get loose again in a hurry. Give me the names. I’ll have the banns published next Sunday.”

“But we do not intend to have any banns either,” said Smeaton.

“Better and better!” cried parson Thickett. “You *must* have a licence; and that is a fee in my pocket.”

“Then you are a surrogate?” said his companion. “That smoothes one great difficulty.”

“No, not exactly a surrogate,” returned the other, leaving off his punch-brewing, and growing somewhat interested in the conversation. “I am a ‘peculiar:’ that is to say, young gentleman, I have a peculiar jurisdiction ecclesiastical here, under the dean and chapter of Exeter. I can grant licences, and prove wills, according to the canon, being a bachelor of laws, as well as

a doctor of divinity, let me tell you.—Now, thank God for all good things!” he continued. “This is the first time I have had to exercise my peculiarity—to my own profit, at least.”

The frame of mind which he was in, seemed very favourable to Smeaton’s object ; but, when the young nobleman, with some precaution, explained to him fully what that object was, the worthy parson looked somewhat aghast. The name of Sir John Newark, indeed, was not mentioned ; but, by some way, he jumped at the conclusion that the lady referred to was Emmeline ; and Smeaton did not contradict him. He shook his head gravely, rolled his fat thumbs round each other for a minute or two, and then shook his head again. Van Noost, however, came to the rescue, judging rightly that the first impression of fear would wear off under the influence of the glass.

“Come, parson,” he said, “think of the punch a little. It is getting cold.”

“So it is, by Jove,” cried the parson, ladling out the punch. “Here, take a glass, sir. It will keep up the spirits of both of us ; for this is a bad business.”

“Not at all,” returned Smeaton, laughing. “It is perfectly right and proper. All that we require secresy for, is to prevent the intermeddling of persons who have no right to meddle.”

“But Sir John Newark is her guardian,” said the parson, drinking some of his punch.

“Not so,” replied the young nobleman. “He is no more her guardian than you are.”

“You must have some guardian’s consent,” said Parson Thickett. “That I know, because I’ve got the register of her birth in there—” and he pointed to a large box in one corner of the room.

“Indeed !” exclaimed Smeaton. “Will you have the kindness to give me a copy of it ? I fancied that Sir John Newark kept the registers at Ale, and would not let you have them.”

“Not he,” replied his reverend companion. “A fico for Sir John Newark! The stingy hound has not asked me to dinner for three years, and moreover tries to defraud me of my dues. He’ll pay no tithes of mint and cumin, not he. So the last time I had my hand upon the registers, I took them away. He had had them then four years ; and that was four years too many. You shall have a copy. He’ll not much like that ; and, if I marry you, there will be an awful explosion.”

He finished his speech with a good draught of punch ; and Smeaton remarked :

“I hope there is no ‘if’ in the case, my good sir. You promised, if I would let you have your way, you would let me have mine.”

“So I did, so I did,” cried the priest, with a jolly laugh ; “but, upon my life, you must tell me something more : first about her being under age. That is the devil, as you have not got any guardian’s consent.”

“Nay,” replied Smeaton. “There you are mistaken, my reverend friend. Have the goodness to look at that.”

As he spoke, he put into the clergyman’s hand a sheet of paper, on which were written two or three lines, in a fine, bold style.

“Ha! What is here?” ejaculated the parson. “Then this is her lawful guardian, is it?”

“I am ready to swear it,” replied Smeaton; “and our good friend here, whom you know, will testify—”

“Oh, I’ll testify anything you like,” interrupted Van Noost, drinking off his punch and holding out his glass. “There, parson, give me some more, and don’t let us have any further objections, there’s a worthy divine. You know you will come to it in the end. We’ll find means to melt you.”

“But suppose I do *not* come to it?” asked Doctor Thickett, looking at Smeaton. “What will you do then?”

“ I have simply one alternative,” replied Smeaton gravely. “ If you refuse, I shall go back to Ale, and, authorised as you see by this paper, take the lady to France with me this very night, as soon as the moon rises.”

“ What, unmarried !” exclaimed the priest, with an affected look of horror. “ That cannot be ; that cannot be. I *must* marry you, by Jove, to prevent scandal.”

“ Exactly,” replied Smeaton, with a smile. “ That is in reality my object. We can be married as soon as we reach Nancy ; but I think, on every account, it would be better that the ceremony should be performed before we set out.”

“ Oh, certainly, certainly,” replied Doctor Thickett. “ Let me look at that paper again. I want to see how the case stands.”

Pushing the punch away from him, he examined the paper accurately ; and at length, lifting his eyes, said :

“ You are, then, the Earl of Eskdale ?”

“He is none other, upon my say-so,” chimed in Van Noost; “and, as we cannot cast many men out of one mould as we cast statues, I will answer for it that there is not a copy of him extant.”

The priest, however, was deeply cogitating the contents of the paper.

“This does not exactly say you are to marry her,” he observed at length; “but, as it tells the young lady that, in perfect confidence of your honour and integrity, she is to do whatever you direct, I suppose we must take the consent for implied.—Well, that is got over. Now then, the thing is, how to manage it. *I* don’t care a rush for Sir John Newark; but I think *you* will find him difficult to manage. How will you ever smuggle her out of the house, and up here to the church, between the hours of eight and twelve?”

“I am afraid,” replied Smeaton, “that the church must not be the place, and the hour somewhat different.”

“But, my good Lord, my good Lord,”

said Parson Thickett, "the canon. You forget the canon. Canon one hundred and four. Why, I should be punished ; and *you* might be punished, too, by the act affecting clandestine marriages."

"Which take place every day notwithstanding," added Smeaton.

"Ay, ay, by Hedge parsons, Mayfair parsons, and Fleet parsons, but not by a regular Doctor of Divinity. Why, I might be suspended for six months from the execution of my office ; and I am not sure that they would not touch the temporalities.—As for the office, deuce take it, I don't care much for that. I want a trip to London ; and that would give me a holiday."

"Pray, how much might be the value in money of your loss, if suspended?" asked Smeaton.

"Why, the matter of well nigh fifty good pounds," replied the parson ; "and that is a great sum to risk."

"It is," assented the young nobleman ; "but there is a way of insuring you against

risk, my reverend friend. Suppose that, the moment you have concluded the marriage ceremony, I put into your hand this little rouleau, containing one hundred golden guineas of the late queen. You would be sure enough then. Moreover, the marriage need not be published immediately in this country; and, even if it were, I believe that none but the lady's lawful guardian could move in the business against you."

"That alters the affair very much," said Thickett, with a very comic twinkle of his eye. "I think it must be done."

"Good," replied Smeaton. "I see we understand each other. Perhaps you are not fully aware of all the privileges of your peculiar jurisdiction; but, at all events, in a case like this, now that the only real and substantial difficulty is removed—that respecting the consent of the lady's guardian—you must swallow any other little technical objections, which probably will never be taken notice of."

“ Ah, my Lord, you have a winning way with you,” said Doctor Thickett ; “ but you have not drunk a drop of your punch.” And with a resigned sigh, he filled himself another glass to the brim.

The rest of the arrangements were soon made. It was agreed that, on the following night, about the same hour, the worthy Doctor should walk down to the village of Ale, and there put himself entirely at Smeaton’s command. The register of Emmeline’s birth was then produced and copied ; and, rewarding him well for his small trouble, Smeaton took himself back to Ale with Van Noost.

CHAPTER XIV.

IMPORTANT business came thick and fast upon all the magistrates of the western counties of England ; for, though parties were very nearly balanced, and the prompt, vigorous, and judicious measures of the Whigs—somewhat unconstitutional as, perhaps, they were at times--overawed the Tories or Jacobites, and kept down any open outbreak, yet positive information was received, if not of a thoroughly organised and widely extended plot, at least, of an im-

mense number of smaller and detached conspiracies, which only wanted time and opportunity to unite and co-operate. Exeter itself was but little tainted ; but in nearly all other parts of Devonshire, in Dorsetshire, Somersetshire, and Gloucestershire, nightly meetings were held, at which, some of the most influential persons in the county were present ; and the very small body of troops quartered at Exeter, were insufficient to perform the duties cast upon them in the neighbouring portions of the country.

The arrival of Captain Smallpiece, and the account which he gave—not a very accurate one—of the surprise of his party and the rescue of his prisoners, called forth a burst of anger and disappointment from the more bustling and vehement magistrates, and somewhat alarmed even the more prudent. Nothing was talked of but sending a larger force to scour the country and re-capture the young Earl of Eskdale and his companion ; and proclamations

were proposed, offering a great reward for his apprehension. In time, however, the counsels of the more prudent prevailed. They represented to their brethren that there was quite sufficient for the troops to do in several other directions; that, if they sent a large force down into the comparatively wild and scantily-populated district round Ale and Keanton, more important parts of the county must be left open for the movements of the disaffected, and many gentlemen whom it was desirable to secure, would have ample time to escape; while, if but a small force was sent, it would only provoke a collision with the adverse peasantry, who would probably gather in great numbers on the first signs of determined hostility towards them. Captain Smallpiece had stated positively that the inn had been invaded by between forty and fifty men; and, though eager to go and take vengeance, he was desirous of having an effective force with him, and, therefore, laid great

stress upon the probability of the number of opponents being increased.

General C———— made some allowance for exaggeration ; but still he represented to the very zealous justices that it would be much better to let the effervescence in that quarter subside ; and, by securing every suspected person of influence who could be easily and rapidly laid hold of, crush rebellion in the bud without any bloodshed.

“Take my word for it,” he said, “when these poor misguided fellows find there is no one to lead or to support them, they will resume their ordinary occupations ; and then, if it be judged necessary, the leaders can be apprehended and punished. In the meanwhile, this young Earl will either come in and make submission, or will fly beyond seas again ; and the latter would be no bad thing. You must remember, gentlemen, you have proceeded somewhat sharply against him, upon authority the value of which you know best ; and, although

government considered it necessary to make sure of all suspected persons, and render them impotent for evil,—yet there is no desire on the part of his Majesty or his minister, either to cram the jails with prisoners, or to treat as traitors those not actually apprehended in arms.”

These last words, which were taken as a rebuke, created a good deal of ill-feeling, and roused a pettish spirit of resistance. None of the magistrates judged fit to interfere with the actual movements of the troops; but they insisted upon issuing a proclamation, offering a reward for the apprehension of the Earl of Eskdale; and some information which reached Exeter during that evening, made them plume themselves mightily upon their sagacity. Four men were sent out, two in one direction, and two in another, to paste up the proclamations on the doors of dwelling-houses and farms; and, in their tour round the country, they obtained intelligence of a strange messenger having passed across towards Exmouth, and of

his having called at the farm of Blackland's where he asked particularly if the Earl of Eskdale was at Keanton, and then inquired the way to Ale Manor, but without going along the road pointed out. These tidings had scarcely been received in Exeter, when intelligence came from Exmouth of the appearance of this strange messenger in the town, of his having held communication with several disaffected persons, of his selling his horse, which was completely foundered by hard riding, and of his purchasing another, with which he rode away over the downs towards Dorsetshire.

On hearing this, General C—— took a pinch of snuff, coolly remarking—

“Then we shall, probably, soon hear more. He won't get to Colyford uncaught.”

Though he treated the matter lightly, to all appearance, the old general did not regard the journey of this messenger as at all unimportant. The persons and the

places he visited, proved sufficiently the object of his coming ; and, by his arrest, it was reasonably supposed that much information as to the feelings and intentions of many persons might be obtained. The old officer was as quiet as ever, but very active. He knew and understood well that the apprehension of a single stranger, a mere bearer of letters and messages, was a very different and much more simple affair than the arrest of a nobleman in the midst of a tenantry who bore a feudal, I might almost say, a clan-nish, affection to his house. A number of couriers, armed, but in a civil garb, went forth from Exeter that evening. They were not unsuccessful. The stranger was met with, just crossing the border into Dorsetshire, by one of those sent to seek him. He was a stout fellow, and armed ; and the courier bespoke him quietly. The stranger, however, was very uncommunicative, and showed himself desirous of getting rid of all company ; but the other

pursued him closely, and never left him till he could obtain assistance for his apprehension. He was then immediately seized and conveyed to Exeter, where, upon being searched, a great number of letters were found upon his person, many of them in hands well known in the county, and all of them bearing one peculiar address ; namely—"To the General commanding-in-chief for his Majesty." They were all broken open and read without ceremony ; and the man himself was then subjected to a long examination, which revealed a great deal more, and gave point to all the ambiguous expressions contained in the letters.

A change now took place in all the proceedings of the authorities at Exeter. Persons, whose apprehension had been before a great object, were now left to escape, or to act as they pleased ; and immediate measures were adopted against individuals who had been hitherto neglected or unsuspected. Troops were called in

from different quarters, and marched in the most opposite directions ; and many of the good quidnuncs of the capital, when they heard of these movements without understanding their causes, blamed severely the vacillating conduct of the people at Exeter, and prognosticated a general rising in the west.

For a dull chapter, this is long enough. The consequences of all these proceedings will be seen ; and, in the mean time, we will go to matters of more individual interest.

CHAPTER XV.

It blew a gale of wind right up the long valley between Ale harbour and Aleton. The night was dark and cloudy. The sky, if not constantly covered with black vapours, was so frequently shrouded by them as only to allow the momentary gleam of a star. On, on, the clouds hurried confusedly over the firmament, like the thoughts of the human mind in a moment of sudden perplexity.

A stout man, well lined within and well

cased without, battled sturdily with the blast as he walked down the valley. Many impediments did he meet with; his cravat was nearly torn from his neck; his long, black garments fluttered like streamers in the wind; and, more than once, his three-cornered hat was blown off and sent hurrying away along the road. At length, after having caught it for the third time, with a somewhat ungodly oath, he tied it tightly upon his head with a pocket-handkerchief, and pursued his way in greater security. He was often half strangled, it is true; still he had not now, as before, to double the distance by the constant pursuit of his hat. Puffing and snorting, and venting many a malediction on those who had brought him such a journey on such a night, he made his way forward, supported by the thought of a hundred guineas as the reward of all his toils. About a mile from Aleton, he passed a man upon the road, who seemed to know him, for he said, "Good night, Master Parson," and walked on; but, at

the entrance of the hamlet, he was encountered by our good friend, Van Noost, who whispered—

“Is not this an unlucky night?”

“Ay, by Jove!” answered Parson Thickett. “I wonder what people are thinking of, to choose such nights for being married on.”

“They must think less who go to sea on such a night,” said Van Noost. “*I* would not, for all the world. I would rather stay on shore and have my head cut off.”

The parson only laughed, and, walking on, they were soon at Grayling’s cottage-door, which readily opened to admit them. The doctor was easily consoled for his long walk on that stormy night, for comforting appliances were within Grayling’s cottage; and Smeaton took care that he should be well supplied. The old fisherman himself was in a somewhat grumbling and surly mood, and more than once went out, stayed a few minutes, and returned. Poor Van Noost sat by the fire-

side, with his eyes fixed upon the flame, unable to cheer himself, even by the strong waters. From time to time, he lifted his ear and listened, as the leaden casements of the cottage rattled and shook in the blast which came rushing up the stream; and though to the children he was good-humoured and kindly as ever, it was evidently with a painful effort that the little statuary forced himself to notice them.

Smeaton, too, was grave and thoughtful. The idea of exposing Emmeline, in a night like that, to the fury of the stirred-up ocean in an open boat, was one that he could not entertain. Had he been alone, with any purpose to accomplish, he would not have hesitated for a moment; but we often feel fears for others which we know not for ourselves; and, even if he could have sheltered her from the cold blast and the dashing spray, he would not have risked a life so precious to him upon that tempestuous sea. Still, the thought of delaying their departure, even for a few hours, was very

grievous to him. He knew right well how much may intervene between the cup and the lip. He had a sort of anxious dread about the morrow, and he hoped, and half persuaded himself, that the wind would go down as the night advanced.

Towards ten o'clock, however, old Grayling returned after a short absence, bringing his nephew and another man with him.

"It is no use my lord," said the younger Grayling. "The ale is getting heavier every minute ; and it is so dirty in the wind's eye, that there is no chance of a lull before noon to-morrow. As to getting off to-night, that you cannot do. We might get a boat out of the bay, indeed ; but she would not live five minutes off the head. I have seldom seen such a sea running as there is now on the Cobstone ; for you see, my lord, the wind being south-western by south—"

But Smeaton interrupted him, saying—

"I will take your opinion, my good friend. There is no use in explaining ; I should not understand you if you

did. For my own life I should not care ; but, where others are concerned, I must be more cautious."

"We don't care much for our own lives either, my lord," said the fisherman ; "but I think you would find it a hard matter to get any one to go off with you to-night, especially if there is to be a lady in the boat."

"Then I suppose I shall have to come down to-morrow?" whispered Parson Thickett to the young nobleman, near whom he was sitting.

"No no, my reverend friend," replied Smeaton. "Your office can be performed in a hurricane as well as in the calmest weather ; and, in a few minutes, we will go to the place where your assistance will be necessary. We must, however, have the cottage clear first, and obtain intelligence that all is safe."

"Ay, ay," added the parson. "Make sure of that."

After staying a few minutes, conversing

with his uncle, the younger Grayling went away with the other man who had accompanied him ; and, soon after, the children were sent to their beds. Smeaton looked anxiously at his watch ; and then, gazing out at the door, he said—

“I think my servant is coming now.”

But he was disappointed. A man arrived who was a bearer of what, to Smeaton, was bad news. The new comer was a stout peasant, of a somewhat superior class, who looked round, shook hands with old Grayling and his wife, whom he called uncle and aunt, and then, doffing his hat, advanced to the young nobleman, and presented him a letter.

“That, my lord, is from Farmer Thompson, —my cousin,” he said. “I undertook to bring it over ; for we find that some of our people are not to be trusted.”

Smeaton broke open the letter, and read the contents with an anxious eye, and a look of considerable emotion.

“What is all this?” he said, at length. “I do not understand it.”

“Why, it is all true, my lord,” replied the young man, bending down his head, and speaking in a whisper. “I saw it, and read it myself, posted upon the very walls of Keanton, setting a price upon your lordship’s head, with the royal arms at the top, and ‘God save the King’ at the bottom. It made all the good men amongst us quite mad.”

“It is not *that* I am speaking of at all, my good friend,” returned Smeaton. “The proclamation here mentioned, perhaps, might be expected; though, I must say, such proceedings, after the assurances I have received, are by no means right and justifiable. But what I allude to, are these latter words.” And, holding the paper to the light, he read—

“According to your lordship’s orders, I have sounded the tenantry, and find almost every man under forty ready

to obey you in all things. Some of them, however, have not arms. But about twenty are fully prepared, and will be ready to mount at a moment's notice as soon as your lordship arrives. The rest can follow you by one or two at a time, in a day or so, as soon as the arms come from Exmouth."

He ceased reading, and looked in the young man's face, as if for explanation.

"Well, my lord," said the other, "I don't understand you."

"Nor I this intelligence," added Smeaton. "I sent no orders to sound the tenantry, or to levy men."

"Such orders certainly came, my lord," replied the young man; "not by your own servant, but by another person, who seemed to know all about you."

"This is some base fraud," said Smeaton, musing. "However, my good friend, stop and refresh yourself for a little, while I write a letter to your cousin. Tell him

that I thank him much for his zeal, but that nothing could be farther from my thoughts than to authorise any raising or arming of the tenantry. I hope, however, this has been done so cautiously as not to call the attention of the magistrates upon you."

"We all met on horseback," said the young man, with a laugh, and a shrug of his shoulders, "upon the green before the great gates; but I don't know that any one saw us."

Smeaton thought gravely, and then replied—

"If it be possible, I will ride over before daybreak to-morrow. Stay, I will write."

Going hastily up to his room above, he wrote a few words in the same sense as those he had just uttered; and, on descending, found the young man quite ready to depart. Parson Thickett, too, was becoming impatient to return to his own dwelling, for it was now past eleven o'clock; and, with a long, bleak walk before

him, he did not at all relish delay. Smeaton was evidently no less anxious ; but still a quarter of an hour elapsed before the man Higham appeared. At the end of that time, however, he entered the cottage, with his gay, saucy look, expecting, probably, to find no one except the old fisherman in the lower room ; but, as soon as he saw his lord, he said, respectfully—

“They are all gone to bed, my lord, and I dare say will soon be in a comfortable doze ; for Sir John and half the servants have ridden hard to-day ; and the rest have drank hard, which comes to much the same thing.”

“Now then, my reverend friend,” said Smeaton, rising, “we will go, if you please. Van Noost, you must come with us. Higham, go on before to within a yard or two of the place where the small path quits the carriage road to the house. There stop, and make sure that no one comes

that way without our having notice by some means."

"I understand," replied the man. "Wrangle, quarrel, talk loud, whistle, shout, or something! I understand. I'll manage it, my lord."

Thus saying, he walked out of the cottage; and Smeaton and the reverend doctor followed.

The young nobleman led his companion round between the two next cottages, desiring Van Noost to go a little in advance; and then said, in a low tone—"There is one question I wish to ask you, Doctor Thickett, which is this:—The marriage you are about to celebrate will be a good and perfect marriage, notwithstanding some slight informalities—is it not so?"

"Just, just," replied the parson. "They may suspend *me*; but they cannot unmarry *you*. They may punish you by the statute for a clandestine marriage; but they cannot make the marriage of no effect.

Marriage is like a good thrashing : when once inflicted, it cannot be got rid of."

"And now, my good friend," pursued Smeaton, pausing, "you must suffer me, I believe, to tie a handkerchief over your eyes."

"Poo, poo ! what is the use of that ?" exclaimed the doctor, laughing. "I know where you are taking me, just as well as you do. I would not have gone so quietly if I had thought you were taking me into the lion's den except by a back way. Why, the priest's chamber, and the way in and out, has been a tradition at the rectory ever since those puritanical times when many an honest parson was forced to take refuge from skull-cap and Geneva, broadsword and bandolier. There used to be a key up at the church ; but, by Jove, my predecessor was fool enough to give it to Sir John. How you got in, I cannot make out."

Smeaton did not think it necessary to

explain, but led the parson on, and found Van Noost at the well with the door open. Doctor Thickett was, with some difficulty, got ' across the water ; and then, when the door was closed, a match was kindled and a lamp lighted.

“ Now tread cautiously,” said Smeaton, leading the way, with the light in his hand.

When they entered the priest's room, however, it was still vacant ; and, trusting to the promises he had received, the young nobleman did not venture to proceed any farther.

“ This has been a chapel once, I think;” observed Doctor Thickett, looking round the room. “ Some notice of it is in the books up at the church. There,” added he, pointing to one of the sides, “ is where the communion-table must have stood.”

Smeaton held up his finger to enjoin silence ; and, in a minute or two after, a slight sound was heard at the extremity of

the room adjoining the next chamber. Cautiously, and as noiselessly as possible, the state bed in the other room was drawn back ; and the door which it concealed was opened. All eyes were turned to that side ; and there was certainly some emotion, if not some anxiety, in the breast of each. The light shone, however, upon the figure of the old housekeeper, who advanced quietly, holding Emmeline by the hand. The poor girl trembled a good deal, with agitation rather than fear ; and her face was very pale. But Smeaton advanced at once, and took her hand, whispering some low, tender words which instantly called her eyes to his face, and the warm glow into her cheek again.

Mrs. Culpepper had stopped the moment they were in the room ; and now, looking anxiously in her foster-son's face, she whispered—"What an awful night it is, my lord ! Everything is ready ; but—"

"It is quite impossible," interrupted

Smeaton, "to expose this dear girl on the sea in such a tempest ; still, as this worthy clergyman has come here to perform the ceremony, the marriage had better take place to-night ; and, before to-morrow, I trust the wind will have gone down. What say you, dearest Emmeline ?"

"Oh, certainly," replied Emmeline. "I shall feel more happy—more—more certain of what I am doing, and what is right to do, when I am your wife, than I do now. Besides, new difficulties might spring up."

"You are right, dear young lady, you are right," said Mrs. Culpepper. "Once wedded to him, wherever he may find you, he has a right to claim you ; and, against whatever wrong is done you, he has a right to protect you. Besides, he is bound to take care of himself for your sake."

The young nobleman smiled, with a glad and happy look at his beautiful bride, and then led her on towards the spot where

Doctor Thickett and Van Noost were standing.

The stout priest would fain have said something jocose ; but Emmeline's timid look, and Smeaton's dignified bearing, at the moment restrained him ; and he contented himself with asking—" This is all with your consent and full consideration, Mistress Emmeline ?"

" Entirely," she replied, without raising her eyes to the face of the clergyman, which she knew right well, and did not much like.

" Well then, we have nothing to do but to begin," said Doctor Thickett ; and, opening the book, he read the service for the celebration of marriage from beginning to end, without sparing them one word of it ; and, when he had finished, he added, " Well, that is done and tight. They cannot untie that knot, let them tug as they will."

" Thank God!" exclaimed Smeaton, press-

ing Emmeline's hand in his own. "But we must each have some proof that this dear knot is tied, Doctor Thickett."

"Well, I will register it as soon as I get home," said the priest. "I could not bring the great lumbering book with me."

"Doubtless," assented the young Earl; "but, if you please, we will each have a certificate under your hand, and those of the witnesses present, that the marriage has taken place.—Van Noost, you have an ink-horn with you, I think."

"Everything ready, everything ready," cried Van Noost. "Here is ink, and pen, and paper, and a table. So now, Doctor, write away."

"Ah, well. I came to read, not to write; but I may as well do it," said the parson, sitting down to the table, and beginning to scrawl in a large but crabbed hand. "There, my lord, that is for you. There, my lady, that is for you. And now, this is my first

fee and reward, by immemorial privilege," he added, pressing his great lips upon Emmeline's cheek.

She shrunk from him, unable to resist her sensation of dislike; but he only laughed, and, turning to Smeaton, received from him the full reward which had been promised.

"And now," he said, aloud, "I had better take myself home. My part of the affair is over."

"Show him the way, Van Noost," said Smeaton. "I will join you at Grayling's cottage very shortly."

The statuary was prompt to obey, and led the fat parson forth, taking Mrs. Culpepper's candle to light them.

Emmeline had borne up well: she had replied clearly and distinctly when taking upon her the irrevocable vows which bound her to the man she loved; but it must not be supposed she had undergone no deep emotions. Every thrilling sensation had been felt;

every wide-extending association had presented itself; all the hopes, all the anxieties, all the bright dreams, all the shadowy forebodings, all the realities, all the imaginings, which attend the pledging of a young and innocent heart to the one loved and trusted, had hurried through her bosom and her brain in those few brief minutes. Yet she had borne up : she had seemed calm after her first entrance into the room. Love, and strong resolution, had given her power to conquer all agitation, till the words were spoken, the vow was uttered, and she was his for ever. Then, however, the mingled emotions rushed back upon her, together with the overpowering feeling that the great change was accomplished ; that she was not her own, but his ; that her fate was no longer lonely ; that she was one with him she loved ; and, had it not been for the arm which glided round her, she would have sunk to the ground where she stood.

The old housekeeper left them, to watch in the passage, though she had little fear of any interruption ; and, to Emmeline and her young husband, it seemed but a moment, though an hour had passed, when she again appeared, with a face of some anxiety and alarm.

“ I hear horses’ feet, my lord,” she said. “ Quick ! You had better speed away. I know not what it may be ; but it is strange at this hour of night. Some one will soon be up ; for the sounds are on the road near the house. —Quick, my lord, quick ! Away !”

“ Hark, hark !” cried Emmeline. “ There are people speaking loud and angrily. Oh, Henry, go, go, for Heaven’s sake !”

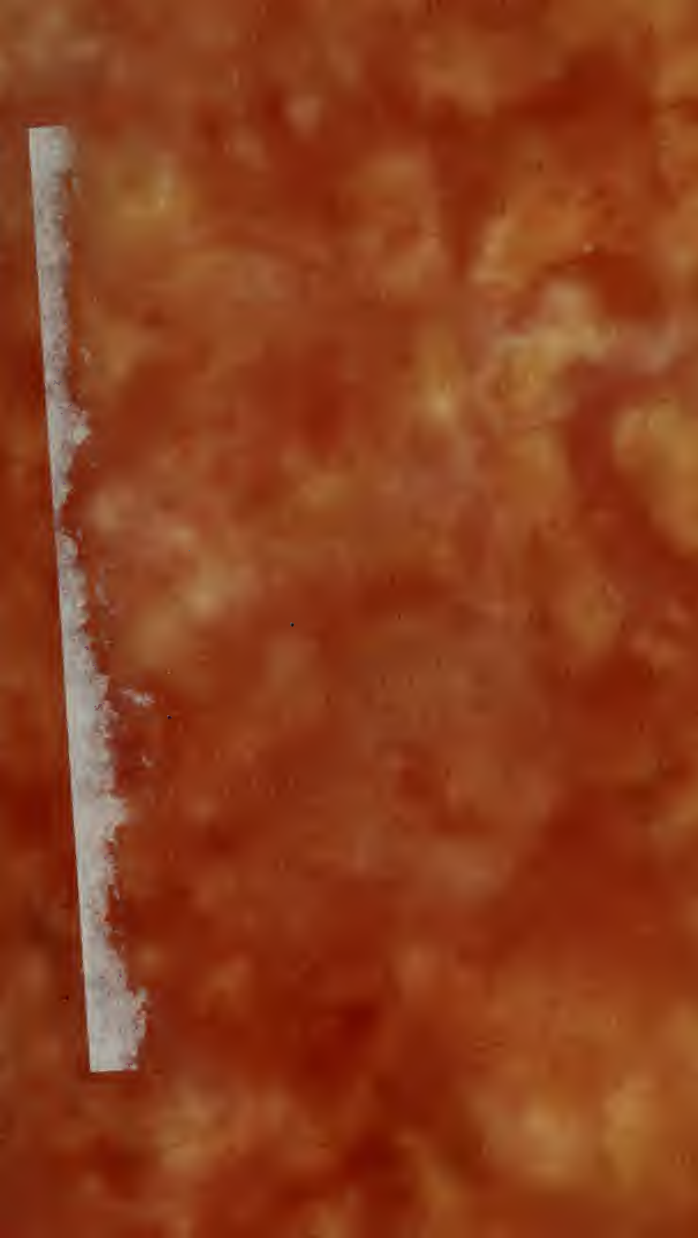
A brief moment given to thought—one more embrace—and Smeaton was gone. Emmeline followed the old housekeeper out of the room ; and the secret entrance was closed as noiselessly as possible. The fair girl, the bride, the wife, retired to her own solitary chamber, while the lover and the

husband took his way to his place of refuge.

When were they to meet again? Who can ever say who asks himself that question when parting from another?

END OF VOL. II.







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